



THE INDEPENDENT

N° 3,279

THURSDAY 24 APRIL 1997

WEATHER: Mainly warm and sunny (45p) 40p

INSIDE THE TABLOID

IN THE TABLOID
6 PAGES OF FILMSWILLIAM BEVELY
GETS THE GIRLIN PROFILE:
STYLAL MAFIOSO

OBITUARY p16 SPORT p26 & p28

DENIS COMPTON:
SPORT'S FIRST
SUPERSTAR

‘Think again. Look in my eyes and know this: I will always deal fair and true’

Colin Brown
and Anthony Bevins

John Major last night stepped up his election campaign with an amazing appeal to voters – ‘look in my eyes’ – and to back him rather than his party.

With just one week to go, and all to play for, the Conservative leader made a savage personal attack on Tony Blair as a man who breaks his promises, and

‘Tories have stopped running their New Labour, New Danger poster with a red-eyed Mr Blair’

someone with a ‘whiff of arrogance’ about him.

But it was the plea to the electorate to put their trust in him, rather than his party, that marked the change of Tory tactics. In an italicised passage of a text issued in Aberdeen last night, Mr Major said: ‘I appeal to you. Don’t let whatever doubts you may have had about the Conservative Party in the past weigh with you, when the future of the United Kingdom may be at stake.

‘Think about it. Think seriously. Think again. Look in my eyes and know this. I will always

QUICKLY

Co-op goes on offensive The Co-operative Wholesale Society went on the offensive against Andrew Regan's Lancia Trust yesterday, accusing the 31-year-old entrepreneur of encouraging Co-op employees to ‘steal to order’, it threatened continued legal action and said it would press for damages against Mr Regan and his ‘fellow conspirators’. Page 22

Yacoub escapes claim A couple whose son was left brain-damaged after a heart transplant, carried out by Sir Magdi Yacoub, lost their claim for damages yesterday after a judge ruled they had been properly warned of the risks. Page 3

Peruvian plaudits

Tuesday night's assault on the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima, in which 71 of 72 hostages were freed from the Tupac Amaru guerrillas holding them, was one of the most successful anti-terrorist operations ever. Page 13



deal fair and true by this great nation.’

Mr Major was exploiting the undoubted fact that he is more popular with the voters than his party, fractious and divided as it is. But last night's appeal was also a gamble on the public's willingness to see the election as a presidential contest between two party leaders.

With Labour officials warning of the ‘nightmare’ prospect of a fifth Tory term, and the confirmation of a one-party state, Mr Blair's positive campaign yesterday turned to a new initiative to create a special ‘People's Lottery’ fund, to divert Libs into popular causes like education and health.

But the Tories last night delivered a diversionary coup by publishing a copy of an old Labour election ‘War Book’ setting out strategic campaign targets. Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party Chairman, said the document, sent to the Tories in a plain brown envelope six months ago, indicated a campaign based on ‘sneak and scare’.

He suggested that the leak could have come from a Labour Party worker who was as appalled by ‘the cynical attitude of those he was working with as the rest of the country will be when they see this document’.

All parties have ‘War Books’, setting out day-by-day campaign strategies, but they normally remain confidential, and Labour said last night that the document that had been sent to the Conservatives was a year old, out of date, and did not include its election masterplan.

The document's summary of Labour's weaknesses, it was said, were not Labour assessments, but rather a summary of Conservative's views.

While Tory campaign strategists are focusing on private polling showing the voters do not trust Mr Blair, Labour campaign managers have noted that the Tories have stopped running their ‘New Labour, New Danger’ poster, with a red-eyed Mr Blair.

They believe that such vicious personal attacks are provoking voter hostility.

Nevertheless, Mr Major last night went for the Labour leader in a strong personal at-

tack, questioning his fitness for office – statistics that will be reinforced in the final days of the campaign.

Contrasting his own leadership style with Mr Blair's, Mr Major said: ‘Like me or loathe me, on the issues I put before you today you know where I stand.’

He accused Mr Blair of having ‘shifted and shuffled and shifted again’ on his plans for a Scottish parliament with tax-raising powers. ‘I do not truly believe Mr Blair understands Scotland. I wonder sometimes how much he even cares for Scotland. More and more recently he has seemed to care

more for the use he can make of Scotland.

‘His policy combines a sense of carelessness with a whiff of arrogance that I for one find slightly unappealing... Mr Blair seems incapable of keeping to one policy for more than a few months.’

Ridiculing Mr Blair as ‘the young mastermind’ who said ‘pass’ to questions in the campaign, Mr Major said the Labour leader ‘in all his experience may not realise that these questions, unanswered, might eventually do our Union to death.’

He accused Mr Blair of changing policy to suit his own

convenience, and seeking power for its own sake – to win whatever the price. ‘I see the Labour red is changing to an imperial purple – and I see a man carried away by his own propaganda. How many more promises does Mr Blair have to break before the people of Britain understand his true nature?’

Warning that Mr Blair would ‘sell out’ Britain in Europe, Mr Major said Labour posed three great threats to Britain – more power for the unions, a soft touch for a federal Europe and paving the way for separation with Scotland. ‘Labour, led by Mr Blair, will destroy British prosperity, risk dividing Britain and put us on the escalator to a federal Europe.’

Labour received a dual boost last night from opinion polls which showed its support holding up, and the announcement that Alan Sugar, the archetypal Thatcherite boss of computer company Amstrad, has switched allegiance to Labour.

Labour is 19 per cent ahead of the Conservatives, according to a Gallup poll for ITN's Channel 4 News.

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Elephants on pill trample family values

Mary Braid
Johannesburg

Any proponent of sound conservative family values could have told them how it would end. In a world first, wild elephants were introduced to the Pill. Now, six months later, the bold experiment has gone disastrously wrong. Elephant society is falling apart.

After six months of intervention in South Africa's Kruger National Park, the resulting possibility of elephantine free love have proved a social disaster. On offer was jumbo-sized birth control. The result was social and sexual mayhem.

It has been discovered that specially-designed hormone implants, the park's pioneering instrument of population con-

trol, leave females permanently on heat and create rampaging bulls, trapped in a state of perpetual – and dangerous – sexual excitement.

The bulls want to constantly mate with the females, complained Dow Grobler, the Kruger Park vet responsible.

Female elephants usually on heat just two days in every 17 weeks, had been hot for an entire six months at a time. Dr Grobler said the cows were being constantly harassed. Whenever they went, a long line of bulls trailed behind them.

‘At one stage there were eight bulls around one cow,’ he added. ‘This is unacceptable.’

The oestrogen implants, injected into sedated females, work along the same lines as the pill in women. They have achieved their contraceptive

aim. In six months no cow has become pregnant despite the unflagging – not to say embarrassing – attention of the bulls.

But families have broken down. In the explosive sexual atmosphere, responsibilities are forgotten. Two baby elephants have gone missing and are presumed dead. Dr Grobler and his staff believe they strayed from home because their mothers were permanently distracted.

The elephant pill's unforeseen effects will encourage critics who condemned the controversial programme from the start as an extravagant waste of money, driven by human sentimentality.

Rural development groups argued elephants should be free to have as many calves as they pleased, and to expand

their families to the size God intended. Rural African communities could then kill and eat the surplus.

Mr Grobler admitted yesterday that the programme was motivated by a sentimental desire to create a painless method of population control which would keep herds small, happy and well cared for. The idea of simply letting populations explode and culling later he said was considered ‘barbaric’ by some.

Mr Grobler now acknowledges the Kruger was misguided. Unwanted pregnancies have been prevented but the social cost has been too high a price to pay.

Yesterday he said the programme was shelved, and the behaviour of elephants closely watched to ensure it

returned to normal. Paul Dacre, editor of the *Daily Mail*, was unavailable for comment last night.

John Wheeler
I NEVER REALISED
WE WOULD
SEX TRAVELERS
ELEPHANTS
...
John Wheeler

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9 77095194643

Travel firms' staff paid to inform on customers

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

Britain's travel agents are being paid to operate as undercover drug informants. High street sales staff, along with booking agents for airlines and ferries, are given substantial cash rewards by HM Customs in return for tip-offs about suspected drug-runners and money launders.

Customs and Excise officers are also providing training and advice for would-be informants about how to spot a criminal, and a hotline to report them. Successful ‘snouts’ can earn from £50 to as much as £10,000 in exceptional cases.

It is understood that one of the four largest travel agents gets about 20 reports of suspicious customers every day, although the majority of these are false alarms.

Travel companies were quick yesterday to play down the idea that their staff had become paid spies.

Thomas Cook, the fourth largest travel agent, trains all new employees about how to identify suspected criminals. A spokeswoman said: ‘They have a prompt card with key points to look out for.’

Details of suspicious customers are passed on to the head office, as the company discourages employees collecting reward money.

Lunn Poly, Britain's largest travel agent, confirmed it has ‘security procedures’ which were used by staff to identify potential offenders, but refused to discuss any of the details. A spokeswoman denied that staff received cash rewards: ‘There's no sanction from head office [for Customs] to recruit staff.’

Informers are increasingly being used to help tackle the growing drug problem. There were record seizures last year, which rose by 6 per cent to 115,000, the highest ever.

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significant shorts

Howard rebuffed by Belfast judge in IRA jail review

Another judicial rebuff was handed down to Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, yesterday when a "whole life" prison tariff on two IRA bombers was overruled by a High Court judge in Belfast.

Mr Justice Kerr said Mr Howard had wrongly declined to explain why he had departed from the view of the trial judge and the former Home Secretary, David Waddington, when increasing the minimum term to be served by Paul Kavanagh and Thomas Quigley, who were convicted at the Old Bailey in 1985 of three bombings arising out of two London bombings.

The trial judge, Mr Justice McCowan, fixed the tariff at 35 years, later increased to 50 by Mr Waddington, but the then Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lane, had said he would not release them at all.

Quashing Mr Howard's decision to revise the tariff up to whole life, Mr Justice Kerr said: "I consider that the Home Secretary was obliged to explain why he was minded to depart from the judicial view expressed by Mr Justice McCowan and to increase the tariff beyond that which had been fixed by the former home secretary."

Patricia Wynn Davies

'Dangerous' killer on the run

A convicted murderer was on the run after escaping from prison, police said yesterday.

Frank Winsor-Smith, 31, went missing from Wellingborough Prison, Northants. Winsor-Smith was serving a life sentence plus an 11-year sentence. Police said he was "dangerous and unpredictable" and should not be approached.

New corruption trial for Army officer

The jury trying a senior Army officer on corruption charges was discharged at London's Southwark Crown Court yesterday and a new trial ordered to begin today.

Major John Ewart, 51, of Dilton marsh in Wiltshire, was responsible for ordering food for the British garrison in Berlin, debts taking "well over" £100,000 in "backhanders" in return for feeding lucrative contracts to a British company.

James Bond picks German marque

 James Bond is driving a German car again in his next movie, it emerged yesterday. Actor Pierce Brosnan (pictured) will have a BMW 750i executive saloon in the new film *Tomorrow Never Dies*, which is due to be released in December.

BMW fought off stiff competition from Jaguar and Aston Martin to secure the agreement – and it looks as though the famous Aston Martin DBS has definitely

driven out of Q's equally famous workshop for the last time.

Contract killers get life jail terms

The daughters of accountant David Wilson finally put a five-year ordeal behind them last night after watching the contract killers who executed their father receive life jail terms.

The nightmare for Michelle Wilson, 31, and her younger sister Lisa, 29, began when hitmen Stephen Playle and Michael Crossley burst into their luxury Lancashire home on March 5, 1992 and shot their father dead.

The murder led a Lancashire Police team on a trail that took them halfway across the world as they brought to justice the sinister American criminal Michael Austin, who ordered the murder, and his UK middleman Stephen Schepke, both now serving life sentences.

It came full circle at Liverpool Crown Court yesterday when Mr Justice Mantell sent friends Crossley and Playle to prison for life.

Royal bodyguard on guns charges

Royal Protection Squad policeman Michael Coulton was remanded in custody when he appeared before magistrates on firearms charges yesterday.

Mr Coulton, 52, appeared before magistrates in Bracknell, Berks, on three firearms charges, which allege that on a date between February 23 and April 22 he was in possession of a home-made firearm with intent to endanger life. A second charge related to the possession of the home-made firearm without holding a firearms certificate. He was also charged with possessing a machine gun on 16 January.

Equity agrees actors' pay rise

Equity leaders yesterday agreed new minimum pay for actors of £25 a week from this year. Actors' minimum pay will rise to £250 a week from April 1998, and by inflation plus 2 per cent from April 1999. A new company and stage manager grade has also been introduced with minimum pay of £261 a week from April 1997.

Frozen food threat to UK bats

Freezing nights are causing bats to starve because they have caused their insect food supply to die out. The bats were encouraged out of hibernation by the warm spells of early Spring, but the frosts have left them little in the way of moths and other night flyers to eat.

"I've never seen so many malnourished bats at this time of year," said bat expert Party Briggs of the Bat Conservation Trust.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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BACK ISSUES
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people



Terre Blanche: A pathetic, farcical figure who flounced from the court (Photograph: Reuters)

Tantrums and tears as Terre'Blanche convicted

Eugene Terre'Blanche, the neo-Nazi many once feared would plunge South Africa into bloody civil war, was yesterday convicted of attempting to murder a former black employee and assaulting another.

The verdict on the country's most infamous white supremacist led to extraordinary scenes in the Potchefstroom Magistrates Court, which was packed with camouflage-fatigued followers of Terre'Blanche's Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB).

The large and hefty AWB leader, whom black witnesses said they were afraid to testify against, fought back tears as he accused magistrate Chris Eksteen, judicial head of this ultra-conservative rural "clorp" in North-West Province, of becoming the accomplice of the African National Congress. "You are a traitor," the judgment is a political judgment," he said.

There were more tears when bail was set at 2,000 rand (£300). Terre'Blanche said he could not afford it and promised he would not reappear before sentencing on June 17. The judge reduced bail by half and the AWB clubbed together to meet it.

Potchefstroom is at the heart of AWB country.

Apartheid may be gone but here old habits die hard. AWB members routinely insulted and intimidated blacks who attended the trial. Throughout the proceedings, the fat white AWB members sat and forced the blacks to stand at the back of the courtroom.

Maurice Oliver, who worked for Terre'Blanche, testified against his "boss", but asked for police protection and claimed his employer had assassinated him too.

Terre'Blanche was found guilty of attempting to murder Paul Motshabi, Mosotho's moffie, and noddled into court to testify how he was beaten up for a month-long coma and permanent brain damage by Terre'Blanche.

Terre'Blanche claimed Motshabi argued with Motshabi in a ditch.

The AWB hit international headlines in 1984 when three members were shot dead by a black policeman after shooting dead a white, brought the black Bophuthatswana "independent" homeland in an attempt to prevent an inevitable black liberation coup.

Mary Braad, Johannesburg

Billie-Jo's mother in tearful exit from funeral

The natural mother of Billie-Jo Jenkins (right) missed her daughter's funeral yesterday, after storming out of the chapel in tears when the murdered teenager's foster mother arrived uninvited. Debbie Woods had specifically asked that the foster mother, Lois Jenkins, should stay away from the packed service in east London for the 13-year-old.

Woods entered the chapel after the horse-drawn carriage carrying Billie-Jo's 5ft white coffin had arrived. She was followed by almost 300 of the teenager's friends and relations, clinging to each other for support in their grief, many of whom had made the journey from Billie-Jo's home town of Hastings, East Sussex.

But then Mrs Jenkins, whose estranged husband Sion has been charged with Billie-Jo's murder, arrived for the service with her four daughters. As soon as she walked into the chapel, just moments before the service was due to begin, Ms Woods looked around, saw her and froze in horror.

Mourners watched in shock as Ms Woods then ran out of the chapel in tears followed by her boyfriend. The couple then drove away from the City of London Cemetery and missed the service as well as the burial.

Sion Jenkins, who is currently

**Four-year-old 'Tiger' tees off**

He is more of a tiger cub than a Tiger Woods, but four-year-old Robert Aldred's precocious golfing skills have prompted his father to predict he will be the next prodigy on the greens.

Robert has surprised golfers at his local club with his "unbelievable" ability. According to his father, Bob, he has managed to par several three- and four-par holes of up to 345 yards in length. He can also drive a golf ball up to 140 yards.

As a result, he has achieved what many a social-climbing executive can only dream of – free membership of his local golf club, at Warley in the West Midlands.

Mr Aldred said that if his son progresses at the same rate he could be Britain's answer to Tiger Woods, who recently became the youngest winner of the US Masters at the age of 21.

"I'm absolutely gobsmacked by some of the things he has done," Mr Aldred said at his home in Warley.

"Debbie is heartbroken at not being able to see her daughter being laid to rest. It is a tragedy for her."

However, a friend of Mrs Jenkins defended her, saying: "She loved Billie-Jo so much that she could not bear not to come to the funeral with her four daughters."

Mark Rowe

briefing

SCHOOLS

Problem governors drive head teachers to retirement

Feeble and inefficient governors are driving head teachers to early retirement, according to a survey published yesterday. The study, by the National Association of Head Teachers, says that more than half of heads believe their governors either cannot or will not do their job.

Others, say heads, interfere too much. They complain that some are trying to change the curriculum for political reasons, while others are storming into classrooms and telling teachers how to teach. Government reforms have given 300,000 school governors, unpaid volunteers, unprecedented powers to manage budgets, monitor the curriculum and appoint and dismiss staff.

The survey, of 150 heads in the London region, tried to discover why so many were leaving their posts early and why about 40 per cent of headships in the capital were not filled at the first attempt.

Ill-health, long hours, governors, government reforms and new inspections organised by the Office for Standards in Education were all given as reasons. The survey found that 53 per cent of heads felt their governors were not effective.

Judith Judd

HEALTH

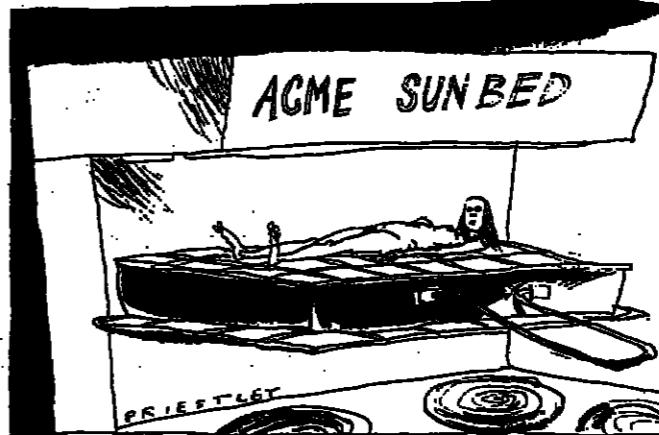
Sunbeds more dangerous than sun

Sunbeds emit three times as many ultra-violet "A" rays as the sun itself, putting those who use them at risk of skin cancer and skin damage, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund warned yesterday. But more women are suffering from what the charity dubs "tanorexia" – the dangerous desire to have a permanent tan and use sunbeds more than once a week.

An average 30-minute sunbed session will give you the equivalent UV dose as a day basking on the beach. There are three types of ultra-violet rays – UVA, UVB and UVC. UVC is the strongest, but is prevented from reaching the earth by the ozone layer. UVB is the most damaging to the skin and is particularly linked to skin cancer. Until a few years ago doctors thought that UVA was safe. However there is now growing evidence that over-exposure to UVA may cause skin cancer – especially in its most serious form, melanoma.

It also affects the middle layer of the skin, or dermis, damaging elastin and collagen. Injury to this layer is responsible for lines and wrinkles and sagging skin.

Glenda Cooper



MEDICINE

Sharks may hold cancer key

Sharks may provide a means of attacking cancer that is to be tested for the first time in patients later this year. An extract from shark tissue called squalamine, discovered in the stomach of the dogfish, is thought to prevent tumours from growing by cutting off their blood supply.

It was discovered by researchers working for Magainin Pharmaceuticals, a biotechnology company based in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, USA. Chairman Jay Moorin told *New Scientist* magazine: "We were looking for antibiotics in the shark tissue but instead we found a whole family of new compounds that stop cells from dividing."

The compounds are believed to act as a primitive immune system in the shark because they kill infectious microbes. Of the 18 compounds discovered, squalamine showed the most promise as an anti-cancer agent. Other substances have shown potential as treatments for AIDS.

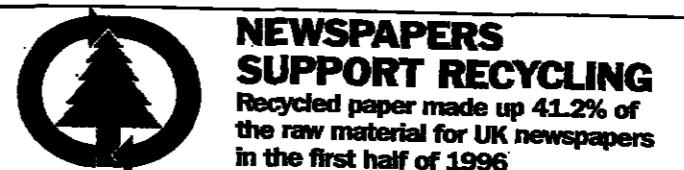
Trials of the drug are expected to begin in the autumn in patients with brain or breast cancer, *New Scientist* said. The idea is to use it to prevent a relapse, rather than as a primary treatment.

MOTORING

Swedish security second to none

Swedish car manufacturer Volvo produces the most secure vehicles, according to a study of cars on British roads carried out for motor insurers Eagle Star Direct. The next most secure vehicles are Nissans, followed by Jaguars, Renaults, Mercedes and Fords.

The company said it was not giving details of manufacturers at the bottom of its list. "We recently revealed that the UK has the worst car crime in Europe and that Leeds is the worst city for crime, so we wanted a good news story this time," said a spokesman.



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Judge blamed over Bridgewater trial

QC tells appeal of non-disclosure of key fingerprint evidence

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The judge, prosecution and defence lawyers all failed to secure a fair trial for James Robinson, one of the four accused of the 1978 Carl Bridgewater murder. The Court of Appeal was told yesterday.

The failings included the non-disclosure by the Crown of key fingerprint evidence from the newspaper boy's bicycle, Lord Justice Roch and two other judges heard.

Patrick O'Connor QC was opening the case for Mr Robinson on the third day of the appeal by the Bridgewaters. Three and the late Patrick Molloy, whose "confession" led largely to the convictions the following year. "If Mr Molloy's appeal is properly recognised as a tale of

police deception and oppression, Mr Robinson's appeal is a tale of the failure of the legal system to secure him a fair trial and to satisfy ... safeguards against injustice," the QC said.

The Crown has already conceded that material backing claims that police forced the confession, the so-called exhibit 54, from Mr Molloy, is enough to make Mr Robinson's murder conviction unsafe. But Mr O'Connor said that the structure of the case against Mr Robinson was riddled with faults anyway.

It would be appropriate for the court to recognise that his conviction would have been quashed quite independently of the "earthquake" of prejudice against him from exhibit 54, the QC said. "We submit that almost every aspect of the system let him down at trial."

Mr Robinson, 63, and cousins Michael Hickey, 35, and Vincent Hickey, 42, have been on unconditional bail since February, when it emerged that police had fabricated a statement to induce Mr Molloy to confess to being at Yew Tree Farm, Stourbridge, West Midlands, where the 13-year-old was killed with a shotgun as he stumbled upon a burglary.

Mr O'Connor told the judges that one of the most significant complaints against the trial judge was that he "wove exhibit 54, Molloy's confession, into his summing up in such a fashion as not only to fail to protect Mr Robinson from prejudice, but to exacerbate it."

The judge [Sir Maurice Drake, now retired] had also "neutralised" one of Mr Robinson's most important defence

points – the gross inconsistencies between the descriptions by eye-witnesses and Mr Robinson's shaven-headed appearance at the time of the crime.

Prosecution counsel had cross-examined him for nearly a day without regard to the proper rules, and failed to ensure the disclosure of fingerprint lifts from exhibit 23, the teenager's bicycle, which had undoubtedly been handled by one of the intruders, Mr O'Connor said.

Defence counsel seemed "patently not to have read documents provided on a plate", which contained the first accounts of important witnesses against Mr Robinson, had sat "without objection" though an improper cross-examination and failed to object to other inadmissible evidence.

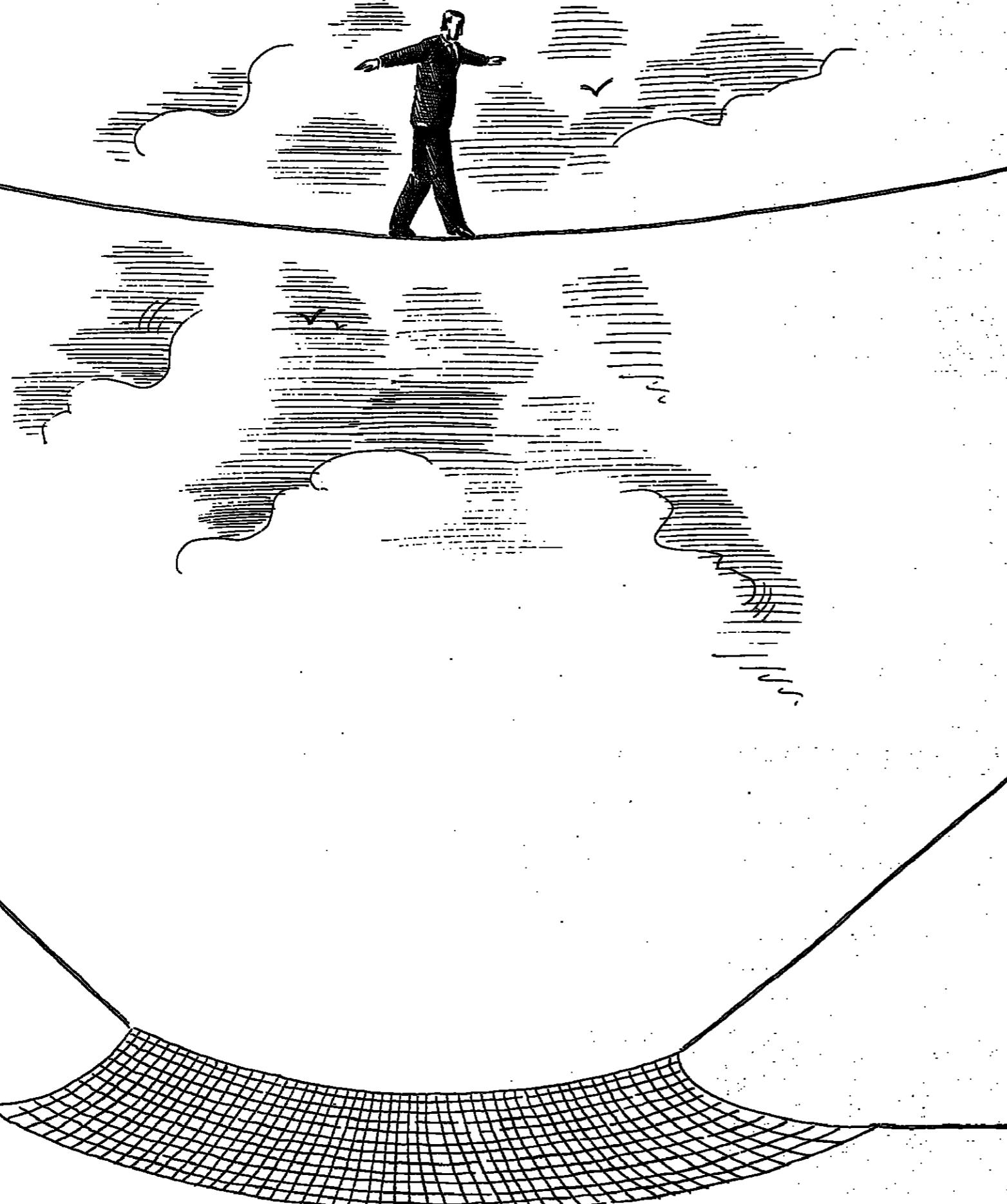
The appeal continues.



Smoking: Emergency services tackle a brush fire on the Isle of Wight downs yesterday

Photograph: Patrick Eden

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Winds fan big fires in two counties

Matthew Brace

Large tracts of two counties were ablaze yesterday as hundreds of fire-fighters fought some of the largest fires seen for many years in Cornwall and on the Isle of Wight.

Fanned by high winds, walls of fire spread rapidly across bone dry gorse and moor land. The fires are the latest in a series which have ignited the country-side during the current dry spell.

Fire crews in Cornwall fighting a huge gorse fire which devastated up to 1,000 acres between St Ives and St Just, said they saw flames moving faster than they could run.

The fire caused a huge pall of smoke which could be seen from several miles away and which one witness said looked like a nuclear bomb mushroom cloud. The main coast road between St Ives and Land's End was closed.

At the height of the blaze 120 firemen and support vehicles from all over the county fought the flames.

One fireman suffered superficial burns.

The affected area is one of

western Europe's most historically significant landscapes. The fire-hit heath with its ancient field systems is an area of outstanding natural beauty, with Sites of Special Scientific Interest and is part of the Ministry of Agriculture's environmentally sensitive area scheme.

It also has one of the largest concentrations of scheduled ancient monuments in western Europe, according to the local council.

The blaze in Cornwall is the third huge fire to hit the West Country in recent weeks. After it was brought under control fire investigators moved in to investigate how it started.

Meanwhile, more than 100 firemen battled to control a huge fire which engulfed 200 acres of Brightstone Forest on the Isle of Wight.

All the Isle's full-time and part-time firefighters converged on the scene as the blaze spread through under dry scrub and copse land.

As the fire spread, the island's brigade, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, sent over four appliances, a water carrier and fire crews by ferry.

Beetles warm to heat of the forest



Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Most animals flee forest fires – but buprestid beetles seek them out, swarming to them from distances of up to 30 miles away, because they need to lay their eggs in freshly burnt wood.

Scientists had always wondered exactly how the beetles, of the genus *Melanophila*, were able to detect conflagrations at such a distance. Now, a team at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Bonn, Germany, has learnt how the beetles are able to function – as heat-seeking missiles. Two organs found in pits beneath their thorax are sensitive to precisely the infra-red wavelengths produced by burning woodlands.

Few animals are able to sense heat directly. Humans detect it

through its effect on the skin rather than as an innate sensation; thus chemicals or friction can generate the same "feeling" as warmth. Many snakes have pits near their nose which can detect the heat given off by warm-blooded prey. But the beetles' sensors operate differently. As the scientists found, the beetles "feel" heat as if it were pressure – though a welcome one. Snakes, on the other hand, have nerve fibres that act as true thermoreceptors, and literally "smell" heat.

In the experiments the German team detected activity in the nerves running from the pits in response to an infra-red lamp. Writing today in the science journal *Nature*, the scientists said: "This provides the first physiological evidence of an insect infra-red receptor."

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Truckers bear a heavy load

French told to lift their blockade, but drivers stay gloomy

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Joe Russell has been driving for 27 years. Fifteen hours a day, six days a week. Yesterday, taking an enforced break with some 1,500 other lorry drivers stuck in a mammoth log jam in Folkestone, he was wondering why he bothers.

Travelling down from Glassgow in his own "tractor", he was trying to take 16 tons of fish to France. The hold-up is wasting valuable hours: "I have got fresh fish and maybe 36 hours of fridge fuel. I've done nearly 20 hours and haven't even made it across the Channel yet."

The French fishermen's blockade of Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk caused chaos for thousands of travellers. Mr Russell and his colleagues included. The fishermen said the

It's all free market now... the rules are easily broken

strike would continue until at least 10am today.

Various attempts were made throughout the day to try to put pressure on the striking fishermen to call off their blockade.

One such effort took place at three o'clock yesterday, when rival cross-Channel ferry companies cast aside their differences to begin legal proceedings against the fishermen, who have dropped their nets outside the major harbours in protest at a new European Union ruling over mesh size of fishing nets.

As far as Mr Russell is concerned, the blockade is just the latest in a series of vexations lorry drivers have suffered since the bonfire of regulations in the 1980s which spawned myriad trucking firms. "It's all free-

market now. There are rules—but they are easily broken. Not by me, mind," says Mr Russell.

"You get cashiers, work that is completely off the company books. You get trip money, a flat fee to deliver goods with no questions asked—all that means is that you get people working all the time without concern for their health. You're supposed to



Game plan: Stranded truckers playing football on the M20 yesterday. Most are resigned (right) to delays

Photographs: Andrew Buurman/AP

have a tachograph that tells inspectors what you have been up to. But things are easily lost or mislaid. People out there are getting away with murder."

Mr Russell, who is not a member of any union, thinks Britain is unlikely to see any French-style revolts against the political establishment. "We do not stick together. In France the police turn a blind eye because they are all in the same union."

Money, as always, provides a convenient answer. "On a good week, I might get £3,000 of work in. But that's non-stop work and probably only works out at £1 for every mile driven. Then you've got your overheads—I spend £4,000 on fuel every month."

Mr Russell, who left school at 15 and grew up in Chryston, a suburb of Glasgow, said: "I wouldn't advise anyone to go into trucking now. I left Glasgow at 8am yesterday, I am supposed to be in Boulogne, then I go to Belgium. I am doing 3,500 miles a week. That's six days a week," he says. "I work a 15-hour day. That's nine hours' driving, two hours' loading, two hours' eating and two hours' emptying the trailer."

To add to his burden he and other lorry drivers face further delays and disruption next month if French transport unions carry out their threats to strike over pension pay-outs.

The move comes after negotiations between Bernard Pons, the French transport minister and the drivers' unions broke down earlier this month. The unions are planning a series of strikes in France beginning on 5 May.

Mr Russell has little faith in the British authorities' ability to resolve the mess. The Freight Transport Association delivered an over-sized invoice yesterday for 800m francs, (£100m) for compensation resulting from last November's French trucker blockade to the French Embassy in London.

Fishermen firm on keeping body and sole alive

The fishing dispute blocking channel ports yesterday concerns 220 small French boats, which make a living from catching sole and other fish in the channel and western approaches.

The fishermen have, somewhat belatedly, taken fright at a European Union directive, agreed by France and other European governments, which would increase the minimum mesh size of their nets.

This is part of an EU programme of conservation, applying to all EU fleets, intended to reduce the catching of young fish and lessen the pressure on disappearing stocks.

The fishermen have three complaints about the new nets. They protest that they will cost a lot to buy—about £20,000 per boat. They fear they will reduce the weight of their catches. Most of all, they complain that the nets will space precisely the young, tender, medium-sized sole which are prized by French cooks and command the highest prices at market.

Attempts were being made last night to arrange a meeting between the fishermen's leaders and the French agriculture and fisheries minister, Philippe

John Lichfield on the question of net size and catches that has ignited the dispute

Vassour. The minister said this was a "highly technical" matter but he was ready to meet the fishermen at any time to try to find a solution.

While this was taking place, a spokeswoman for P&O Ferries in England said the ferry companies had been granted permission by the French courts to serve injunctions on 15 fishermen blockading Calais.

"The injunctions should be served within the next few hours by French civil servants on those named individuals. If they have not moved within one hour of receiving the injunctions, they will be liable for fines of 10,000 francs (£1,100) per person per hour that they remain blocking the port."

"We are very hopeful this will bring an end to the blockade. If the fishermen do not move after the injunctions have been served, they can remain in place but the fines will mount up."

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Environment watchdog loses its teeth

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

Scotland's new environmental watchdog is so strapped for cash that it will not be able to monitor for disasters like the Brae oil spillage or a nuclear leak from a submarine in Holy Loch.

The agency is facing a 10 per cent cut in funding and a cash crisis because it suddenly finds itself unable to recover VAT – unlike its larger counterpart covering England and Wales.

At a meeting last week, the main board of the Government's Scottish Environment Protection Agency, which came into being last year, ordered its three area offices to make cuts to fill the £3m hole which has opened in its £28m budget.

The eastern area is worst affected, with its emergency out-of-hours service dropped. If a severe pollution incident happens on a loch or river at night or over the weekend, the agency will not be informed until the next working day begins.

The move has angered the River Tweed Commission which oversees a salmon fishing industry worth £13m a year to the Borders' economy. Judith Nicol of the Commission said: "To have the agency responsible for river pollution available only during office hours surely cannot be right."

Staff training and monitoring of pollution of land, water and air is being cut back in all three areas and the agency is concerned that it may be unable to meet some of its legal obligations.

With no money, the agency is being forced to break the law

vacancies. It also regulates waste-dumping and radioactive emissions from Scotland's nuclear plants.

A spokeswoman said monitoring of radioactivity in the waters of Holy Loch, where there was a US nuclear submarine

the agency's 'West Region Board and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' director in south-west Scotland, said: "In effect, they are being forced to break the law because they haven't got the money to meet their commitments."

SEPA's main board chairman Professor William Turman said: "The situation was dire. South of the border the Government's new Environment Agency covering England and Wales was able to recover VAT. Furthermore, the Scottish agency's pre-

decessor organisations like local councils and river purification boards had been able to recover VAT.

However, Mike Thompson of Customs & Excise said SEPA "simply doesn't qualify" because it is a quango receiving its funding from the Scottish Office. He said the Treasury felt that allowing it to recover VAT would open the floodgates for others.

But the Environment Agency in England and Wales is not considered to be a quango, even though it has very similar functions and duties to its smaller Scottish sister. The larger organisation expects to reclaim over £50m VAT this year from the Treasury.

Richard Dixon, head of research at Friends of the Earth Scotland, called on the Government to address the funding crisis. "Instead of carrying forward its obligation to improve the Scottish environment, the agency is facing an unfair burden which means it is having to cut back its activities," he said.

Stunning development: devastating weapons that do not kill

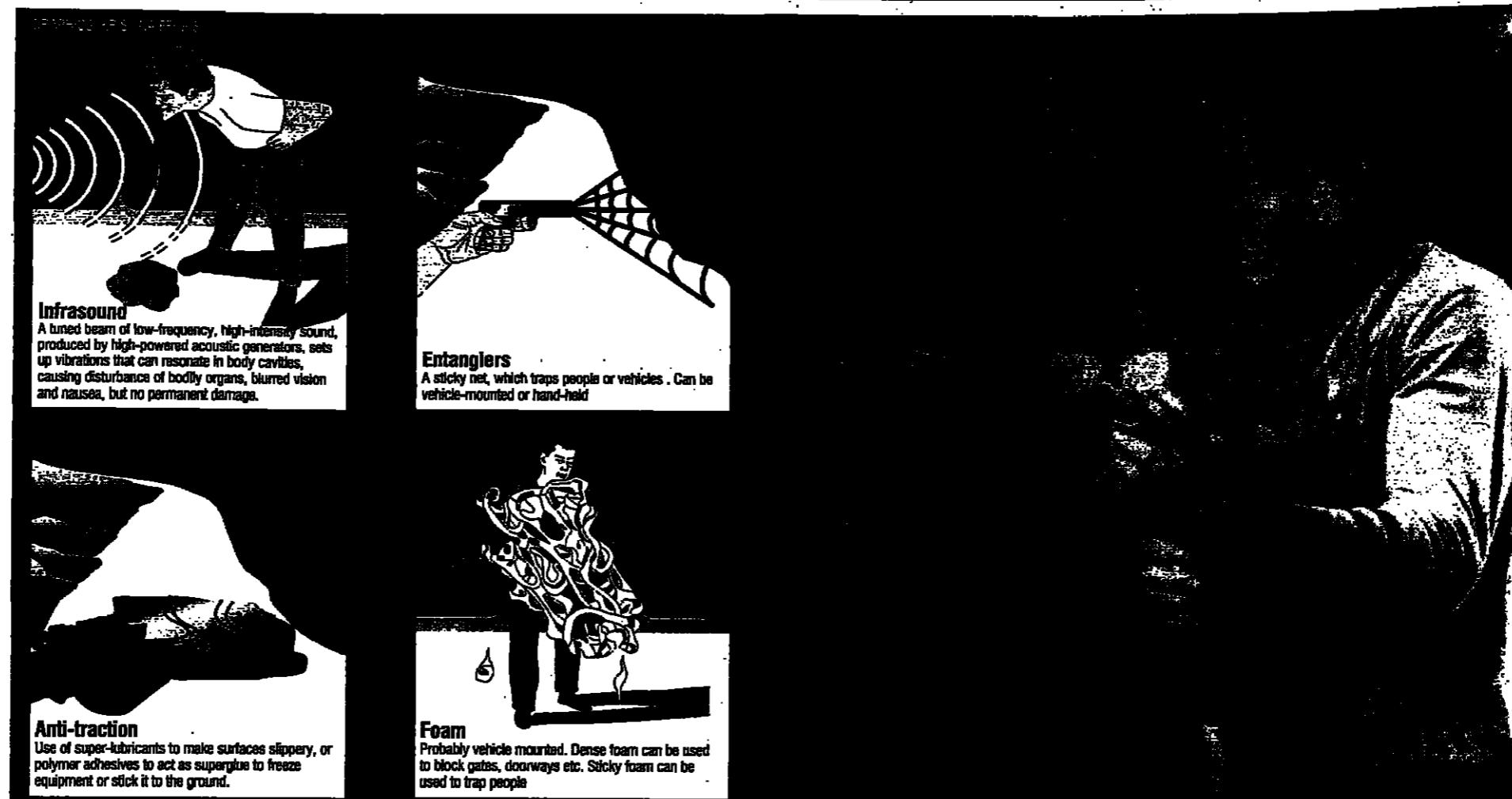
Christopher Bellamy on science that makes death unnecessary

"Phasers on stun..." The dream of being able to give an order like *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk – immobilise your opponent without killing or maiming – has long been part of science fiction and in recent years military scientists, particularly in the US, have been working to turn it into reality.

Non-lethal – or "less-than-lethal" – weapons have been around for hundreds of years. The Aztecs of central America, who needed live prisoners to sacrifice, had weapons designed to wound, not to kill.

More recently a number of non-lethal weapons have been in widespread use for the past 30 years. The most widely used are rubber or plastic bullets and CS gas, and also stun grenades.

In the last few years US companies have developed even more exotic non-lethal weapons including sticky foam and rubber balls to impede movement, sticky nets and chemical com-



pounds to make fuel useless or to change the composition of roads. Low-frequency sound will cause a person's insides to vibrate, causing nausea and dizziness, but no permanent damage.

Other weapons, while "non-lethal", are widely detested – notably laser weapons which can blind soldiers, especially those peering through optical instruments. Weapons designed

specifically to blind people were recently banned by international treaty, although those designed to smash optical instruments – which might blind people as a side-effect – were not.

A further complication is that, ironically, current international law permits only weapons designed primarily to kill, but prohibits those designed primarily to wound or disable.

The Bradford authors said

"research and development of new weapons is proceeding apace, in what amounts to an almost unseen arms race. Existing weapons conventions may be undermined as the arms industry throws up inventions that belonged in the realms of science fiction when those treaties were signed. Some allegedly non-lethal weapons rely on chemical and biological agents and are already snapping

at the heels of international law".

The Bradford authors said further dangers include the use of non-lethal weapons for domestic repression – the use of electric sun batons as torture weapons is well documented and contemporary conflicts often blur the line between

police and military operations. The authors called for non-lethal weapons to be assessed,

not as benign innovations but as just another type of weapon, capable of being used for good or ill. "War", as Clausewitz said, "is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will." Lethal or non-lethal, it remains an act of force.

□ *Non-Lethal Weapons: A Fatal Attraction?* Dr Nick Lewer and Dr Steven Schafle; Zed Books, London, 1997; paperback £12.95.

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MoD admits Gulf War pesticides error

Nicholas Schoon

Browning to Liberal Democrat Paul Tyler.

The Ministry of Defence did not check with the Government's own pesticide experts before using large quantities of dangerous organophosphate (OP) pesticides in the Gulf War.

The admission comes in a letter this week from junior agriculture minister Angela

reducing ill, is one possible cause.

Mrs Browning's letter says: "You asked whether the Ministry of Defence had contacted this department at the time of the Gulf War to obtain advice on the use of OP pesticides. We have checked the position carefully and I can confirm that no such approach was made." Mr Tyler, MP for North

Cornwall and now the Liberal Democrat's candidate in the constituency, said yesterday: "It is mind boggling that one government ministry which was going to be responsible for the use of OPs never thought to ask questions about safety measures." Gulf veterans had "every reason to feel aggrieved", he said.

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DAILY POEM

Liverpool aim to keep pride intact

Although the Graeme Souness era is less than fondly remembered at Anfield, a European night during his term as manager provides an inspiring precedent for Liverpool as they strive against overwhelming odds to reach the Cup-Winners' Cup final tonight.

With Roy Evans' side trailing 3-0 to Paris St-Germain after the first leg of the semi-final, history shows that even the Liverpool of Shankly, Paisley and Ragan never overturned such arrears in continental competition. When David "Supersub" Fairclough completed an epic fightback against St Etienne en route to the Champions' Cup 20 years ago, the French lead had been only 1-0.

Yet in 1991, Auxerre, leading 2-0, came to Merseyside to complete formality in the Uefa Cup and returned to France shell-shocked. Liverpool scored in four minutes and quickly levelled the aggregate score. Seven minutes from the end Mark Walters ensured that they made up a two-goal deficit for the first time ever.

That, as Evans will recall from his role as coach, was with a transitional team who were struggling against all manner of lower-division visitors. It was also in a half-empty stadium. Tonight, PSG face a vastly superior Liverpool line-up – one with something to prove now that the Premiership appears to have slipped away – and Anfield will be packed.

The strategy is sure to be similar: try to score early and see whether PSG can take the heat. The Liverpool manager has intimated that he will play Robbie Fowler, Stan Collymore and Patrik Berger together for the first time this season. Evans may also switch from a defensive trio plus wing-backs to a flat back four in the belief that the French might not relish a more "British" approach.

"It's a tall order but we must believe we can do it," Evans said.

Phil Shaw on the Herculean task facing Roy Evans' team tonight

yesterday. "If we can get an early goal, we can get them on the run. If you don't believe you don't achieve."

"Normally you try to play a patient game in Europe, but we must set the tempo. The bottom line is that we've got to play fantastically and they'll have to be poor if we're to win."

Steve Harkness and Bjorn Tore Kvarme are respectively injured and ineligible, leaving Evans to choose replacements from Phil Babb, Neil Ruddock, Rob Jones and Dominic Matteo. Michael Thomas (knee) and Matteo (hip) face late fitness tests.

The error-ridden David James is set to retain his place – Liverpool have no plausible alternative keeper – knowing that whatever miracles are mustered at the opposite end, one slip could give PSG an away goal and almost certainly the tie.

For the Parisians, who have perhaps even greater expectations of the 21-year-old striker Jerome LeRoy than Anfield has of Fowler, left-back Didier Domi is the only casualty. Their Brazilian manager, Ricardo, anticipates a "much more aggressive" Liverpool than at Parc des Princes. If that proved the case, he added, it would merely create more space for his team to counter-attack.

■ In the other Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final tonight Fiorentina and Barcelona start at 1-1 in Italy. Fiorentina will be without the suspended Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta, who scored their equaliser in the first leg. For Barcelona the former Tottenham midfield player Gheorghe Popescu is suspended.

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"It's a tall order but we must believe we can do it," Evans said.

Le Saux's resolve

ALAN NIXON

Graeme Le Saux has refused to commit himself to Blackburn Rovers despite pressure from the club's owner, Jack Walker, to keep the England left-back at Ewood Park next season.

Le Saux made a surprise return to the Rovers side after being dropped and went on to score in Tuesday night's win over Sheffield Wednesday.

He was not prepared to rule out a move in the summer, however, saying: "All I want to do is make the most of my career in the time I've got available. I've not made my decision public yet, but everybody is aware of the problems. I don't want other things to affect my game."

He added: "It would be unprofessional to say anything until this matter is resolved with the club. You had better ask the people in charge about that."

Le Saux said that his "troubles" had affected his performances for the past few months when his club form has dipped.

"This has been going on for a long time," he said. "It's a situation that had got the better of me; it's been serious enough to put me off my game. But I don't want a reputation as a problem player. I was trying to cope with all that was troubling me as best I could, but it wasn't working."

FOOTBALL RESULTS

Yesterday
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division: Sutton 3, Ipswich 2; Barnsley 0, Coventry 0; Charlton 1, Middlesbrough 0; Luton 1, Bristol City 0; Reading 4, Southampton 2.
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY (Tunis) 2-0 England O.

Today
UEFA CUP Semi-final: Second leg: Monaco 0, Liverpool 2; Juventus 2, Schalke 0-2; Lazio 6, Valencia 1; Ferencvaros 0 (agg 2-1), after extra time.

FA CUP Semi-final: Chelsea 1, Liverpool 0; Arsenal 5, Everton 0; Aston Villa 0, Manchester City 0.

FA CUP Semi-final replay: Blackburn 4, Aston Villa 2; Liverpool 2, Manchester City 1; Chelsea 2, Nottingham Forest 1; Arsenal 2, Manchester United 1; Everton 2, Aston Villa 1.

FA CUP Semi-final: Birmingham 2, West Ham 1; Middlesbrough 2, Liverpool 1; Middlesbrough 2, Aston Villa 1; Chelsea 2, Liverpool 1.

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THE INDEPENDENT

election '97

Taxes: the big unanswered question

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

With just one week to go before polling day, the one big question that remains unanswered is: What will happen to taxes under Tony Blair or John Major?

The blunt answer is that they can be expected to go up. The Treasury Red Book, giving forecasts of tax burden, shows a steady increase up to 2002 – providing the official cover for both parties to put taxes up.

At the start of the campaign, *The Independent* posed a number of critical questions that would need to be answered, and most of them have been answered, insofar as any politician ever answers straight questions.

Would Labour take Britain into a single currency? Of course it would, though only after the same "triple-lock" safety process offered by the Tories: of Cabinet, Parliament and referendum approval.

Would Mr Ashdown keep Mr Blair in power without proportional representation? There has been no precise answer to that, though it has not been pressed too hard.

But the big remaining question is on tax – and neither the Conservatives nor Labour will give a hard answer on that – probably because most politicians and City analysts expect taxes to go up, whatever happens, and whoever wins.

While Labour has made no secret of its plans for a windfall tax on the privatised utilities, there are undoubtedly hidden agendas on both sides of the political divide. Yesterday, Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, again concentrated fire on the Tories' historical weakness for increasing VAT.

"If the Conservatives win again," he told an election press conference, "nothing will stop them increasing VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent and extending VAT further."

John Major has shown a marked reluctance to answer questions about VAT. When *The Independent* repeatedly asked him whether he would give a commitment not to increase the rate or extend the VAT base at the start of the campaign, the Conservative leader repeatedly dodged the question.

He said: "I cannot conceive, except in the most exceptional circumstances that cannot be foreseen at the moment, that we would need to increase general

What will happen to taxes under Blair or Major?

If things go badly, would the Tories take us out of Europe?

Will Blair back voting reform if he wins?

Would Labour take Britain into a single currency?

Will the parties spend more on schools – and who loses?

Would Ashdown keep Blair in power without PR?

Can Labour match the Tory pledge on NHS cash?

What do the parties mean by radical reform of welfare?



Revenge of the greys: The Labour Party drew attention to John Major's record of tax rises by parading 22 men in masks through Birmingham city centre yesterday

Photograph: Mike Sewell

at tax levels in the next Parliament, given our public expenditure plans and the outlook for the economy.

"So I think that is a perfectly clear answer to the points you have made about value-added tax and subject to quite unex-

pected events I'd expect that to remain the situation."

Asked for the same pledge in the 1992 election campaign, Mr Major told *The Independent*: "We have no plans and no need to extend the scope of VAT."

Labour has said firmly that it

will not extend the base of VAT to basic essentials – food, children's clothes, books and newspapers and public transport fares – and that it will reduce the rate of VAT on domestic power and fuel bills to 5 per cent, the lowest level now allowed under European law.

Mr Brown and Mr Blair have also made commitments that they will not increase basic 23 per cent and 40 per cent rates of income tax during the lifetime of the new parliament.

Only the Liberal Democrats have marked themselves out as

the party of tax and spend, with their promise to increase the basic rate of income tax by a penny in the pound to fund more spending on education and a new higher rate band of 50p for those on taxable income in excess of £100,000.

Their plans would mean that half of the 25 million income taxpayers would be worse off, but even they misleadingly said their plans to take 500,000 low-pay taxpayers out of income tax would reduce tax "for 99.5 per cent of all income taxpayers."

Hamilton strikes at Bell with help of fax machine

Jojo Moyes

The battle between Neil Hamilton and his rival for the Cheshire seat of Tatton, Martin Bell, has moved from the heat to the fax machine with Mr Bell's campaign team accusing Mr Hamilton of concocting a "campaign by fax", and deluging them with legal threats and complaints.

Since Mr Bell's first attempt to put forward his nomination papers last week, Mr Hamilton and his agent, Peter McDowell, have issued legal threats both in person and via Mr Hamilton's solicitors, Crockers. They have also made numerous complaints about his campaign – including the "over-enthusiastic" siting of Mr Bell's posters.

"They're trying to demoralise us," said a spokesman for Mr Bell's office. "It's all done as a distraction because they know that our campaign has been set up from scratch. We've had to respond to everything."

Mr Bell was last week forced to re-submit his election nomination following a legal threat over his use of the term "anti-corruption" to describe himself. Mr Hamilton then complained about Mr Bell's use of the word "independent", but this was dismissed by MacClelland's acting returning officer.

A letter received soon after from Mr Hamilton's solicitors threatens further action over Mr Bell's campaign statement.

"The remark that you will do all [you] can to remove the stain

of corruption from public life" is a clear accusation that Mr Hamilton is corrupt, an accusation the gravity of which is redoubled in the context of an election campaign, the letter says. It concludes: "Our client reserves his right to commence proceedings against you claiming damages for libel following the publication of the report by Sir Gordon Downey. If, as is confidently expected, the report clears our client of the charges of corruption, the damages he will be seeking will be very substantial indeed."

Mr Hamilton himself sent one three-page letter to Mr Bell accusing him of breaking his word not to describe himself as an "anti-corruption" candidate and to run a "decent and dignified" campaign. He adds: "Will you accept that your own role in this election is but an extension of *The Guardian's* campaign against me?"

Letters from Mr McDowell, Mr Hamilton's agent, suggest that one way or another, the Battle of Knutsford Heath is not yet over. He has complained that Mr Bell's supporters are being "over-enthusiastic" in putting up posters for their man. "I think you should know that Knutsford's large and illustrious Heath's [sic] are private property, owned by Randall Brooks," Mr McDowell states in one.

"Randall has given me permission for 'Hamilton' posters. He will definitely not be allowing 'Bell' posters."

THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

THE CAMPAIGN

Labour's campaign day began in a TV studio with the promise of a "people's lottery" to channel money into education and health. Celebrities were on hand to endorse the party's ideas for diverting £1bn from the National Lottery Wednesday draw into health and education.

Tony Blair stayed in the news with the release of the Party Election Broadcast anticipated as "Blair: The Movie", made by the documentary maker Molly Dineen. The film will be shown on television tonight.

The Liberal Democrats marked the anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare by pledging £1.75bn over the next five years for school books. The party's policy would amount to an extra £15,000 a year for a typical primary school and £110,000 a year for a secondary school, they said.

The Conservatives began the day with an attack on Labour's plans for pensions, saying that measures such as the windfall tax and the removal of tax relief on private health insurance would hurt the old most.

Later, John Major was in Scotland while Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, made waves in London by leaking a copy of Labour's "war book" – the plan for the election campaign.

Labour said the book was out-of-date and contained nothing damaging to their cause.

KEY ARGUMENTS

John Major warned voters in Aberdeen of the dangers of Scottish devolution under Labour. "Look in my eyes and know this: I will always deal fair and true to this great nation," he told them.

Labour's lottery plans were an admission that their sums did not add up, the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, said. "They are falling around looking for money to pay for commitments they have been talking about. It is an illustration of Labour's black hole," he said.

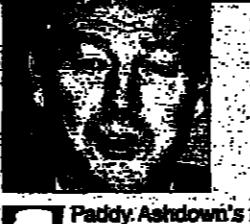
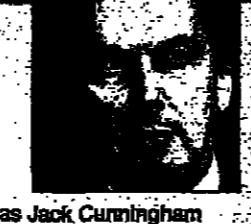
David Steel, the Liberal Democrat elder statesman, was asked on ITN's lunchtime news about his attitude to drugs. "Politicians are not in the best position to pontificate on this subject of drugs. It is largely a generational problem," he said.

Peter Mandelson, Labour's campaign manager, introduced their Party Election Broadcast about Tony Blair with the words: "This is not Blair the movie, this is Blair the man." In the film, Mr Blair says that as a boy he had never wanted to be a politician.

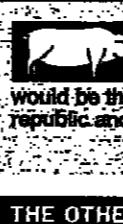
"I thought that politicians were complete pains in the backside," Mr Blair said.

"My ambition as a lad was to play football for Newcastle United."

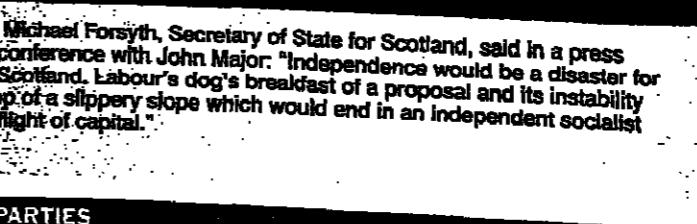
GOOD DAY



BAD DAY



HOGWASH



THE OTHER PARTIES

The Ulster Unionists suffered a blow when Jim Kilpatrick announced that he was defecting to the Rev Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party. He said he had switched because the UUP had gone soft on the union and was prepared to re-negotiate Northern Ireland's position within the UK.

MEDIA STAR



Sean Connery is as well known these days for being the SNP's very own media star as for being an ex-007, having provided voice-overs for several SNP political broadcasts in the past. Yesterday the party announced a plan to send out half a million letters appealing for votes, "signed" by the appearance on behalf of the party in this campaign, but in the fulfilling his "dearest wish" of an independent Scotland.

Dimbleby

Parties over La 'War

Greens badg over backin

Dimbleby the consummate performer shows his hand



Triumphant mood: Peter Snow, David Dimbleby and Jeremy Paxman sharing a lighthearted joke with photographers on the BBC's election night set. Photograph: Tom Pistor

Rob Brown
Media Editor

Television's grand inquisitor Jeremy Paxman appeared distinctly jumpy yesterday when the tables were turned on him by media pundits invited to marvel at the BBC's *Election Night* studio set.

Paxman had to be prodded out of his self-styled "pen" - an interviewing lair up in the gods of the studio - by the Corporation's press handlers who insisted that he should make a smiling appearance following a recent magazine interview in which he hinted at some dissatisfaction about being kept in David Dimbleby's shadow.

"Listen, I was not disappointed. It was what we call in the trade a joke. J.O.K.E." he told me when I did my best Paxman impression and raised this vexed topic.

Later, loosening up slightly, he described himself as "the fool to Dimbleby's King Lear" and said he would dread being asked to play the big serious anchorman role at a future election. "It seems to be rather complicated."

It sure does. The BBC is hailing its *Election Night* special as the biggest broadcasting event in its history. It will certainly be among the longest - running from 9.55pm to at least mid-day on 2 May.

It took 16 lorries to deliver and three days to erect the silver-hued tubular steel "theatre-in-the-round" set in studio 1 at BBC Television Centre, which will serve as the hub of the operation, housing 120 computer terminals, 200 monitors, 100 telephones, 30 miles of video cable and wiring and backed up by 80 outside broadcast units dotted throughout the British Isles.

Although the cameras will be trained on Dimbleby and his fellow presenters, plus the delighted and dejected politicians they lure into Paxman's lair, viewers will also see the

camera crews, the results' team and computer back-up people.

"They will all be visible so that licence-payers can see their money is well-spent," said Peter Horrocks, editor of *Newsnight* and *Election '97*, who was keen to point out that the cost of the coverage would be about £2.5m, roughly the same as in 1992.

But there was no sign of skimping. The lavish set is a cross between the Starship Enterprise and a Roman amphitheatre. Dimbleby averred that it reminded him of the Cirque du Soleil, a famous Canadian circus troupe, at the Royal Albert Hall. "You expect acrobats in leotards to appear," he jested. He may be the circus master, but he will also be performing, as ever, a double-act with Peter Snow, who was like a child in a toy shop yesterday demonstrating his new virtual swingometer, live 3-D graphics and zappy election night computer games.

One sequence - already tested on the Wirral South by-election result programme - will depict the parties' battle-buses either roaring ahead or disappearing into a watery ditch, depending on their performance at the poll. Another will show key target seats being smashed open on screen if the incumbent is unseated.

"Visually the graphics are the most exciting," Snow enthused. "They'll be able to tell the story as never before."

The story the BBC wants to tell on 2 May is that it has once again triumphed on the ratings front. In its 1992 *Election Night* coverage the Beeb drew 8 million viewers, twice as many as ITN. By 2am its audience had fallen to 4.5 million, but this was three times as large as its commercial rival.

"I'd be disappointed if our coverage this time round wasn't as popular," said Mr Horrocks, issuing a further solemn pledge to licence-payers. "It's long, but it's not going to be boring."

Parties battle over Labour's 'War Book'

Christian Wolmar
and Colin Brown

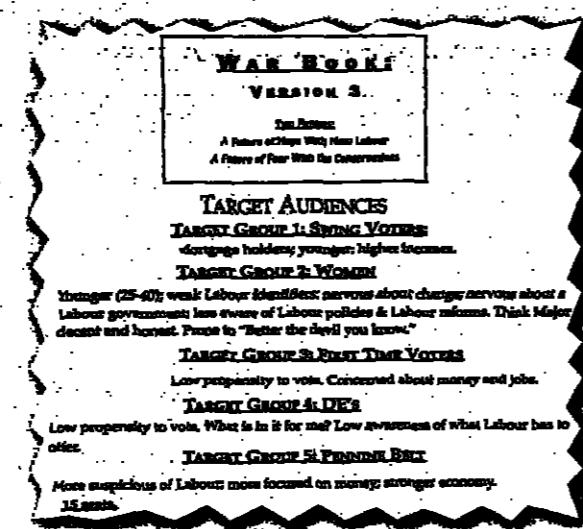
Labour's battle plan for the election, revealing its assessment of both its and the Tories' weaknesses and strengths, was leaked by the Tories yesterday, provoking a row over its importance and relevance.

Brian Mawhinney, Conservative chairman, said the document, "War Book Version 3", reflects very closely what has been happening over the last six months in what is quite clearly the most cynical political campaign ever seen in British politics. It correctly identified Labour's own perceived weaknesses, suggesting the Tories' decision to concentrate on Europe was a result of Labour accepting that it was seen as likely to sell out to Brussels.

Labour spin-doctors appeared unconcerned about its publication but Dr Mawhinney grabbed the evening headlines, knocking off Labour's announcement about the lottery. Labour also hinted that it had similar documents relating to the Tories' plans but a source said: "We would not be stupid enough to publish them."

Tory candidates are being issued with extracts from the 30-page dossier to sharpen their campaigning on the doorstep by showing that Labour secretly feared it was weak on the "hidden left", the unions, the lack of experience of Tony Blair's team, and being divisive.

However, Dr Mawhinney failed to point out that the Labour analysis identified Labour's strengths as "Tony Blair - young, strong and dynamic, leadership"; and education, and the NHS were seen as "winning" issues for Labour. Labour sources last night said



Poll position: Excerpts from the leaked document

it was a year-old document, it was not their current election plan and denied it was a summary of what Labour said about itself. Labour said it listed Tory claims about their own strengths.

The War Book lists both parties' strategies and plans, and outlines in detail Labour's plan for the five months in the run-up to the election. While much in the document, which is at least six months old, has happened as predicted, or has been announced subsequently by Labour, some lines of attack have been dropped by Labour and others have been added.

For example, a page referring to Tory pledges says: "You will pay to visit your school; you will pay more for books; you will pay VAT on books; there will be more crime; guns and knives still legal; you will pay for water through a meter." This fine of attack was prepared in anticipation of announcements by the

Greens badger Ashdown over backing for bypass

Barrie Clement

Paddy Ashdown attempted to spend quality time with a dormouse and a pantomime cow yesterday. Amid eco-heckling from Green Party activists and interjections from the ersatz bovine creature, Mr Ashdown tried to explain his party's support for the Newbury bypass.

The front end of the cow was protesting over the construction of the road, as indeed was the back end. The Liberal Democrat leader addressed the head of the cow, arguing that while the bypass would have an environmental impact, it was in-

definitely preferable to the current state of affairs. The Liberal Democrats' own polling had shown 87 per cent of residents supported the decision.

The arguments were having little impact on the beast and Mr Ashdown was advised by a party activist that he was talking to the wrong end of the animal.

The cow confided to *The Independent* that it was an eco-criminal, having been arrested for trespassing on the bypass construction site. As a condition of bail, the cow, or Rockin' Rosie, as she is called, was regularly attended by the local police station.

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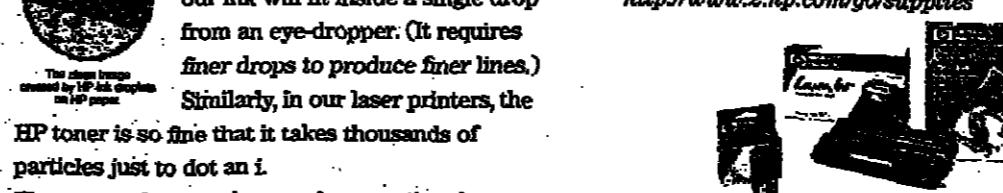
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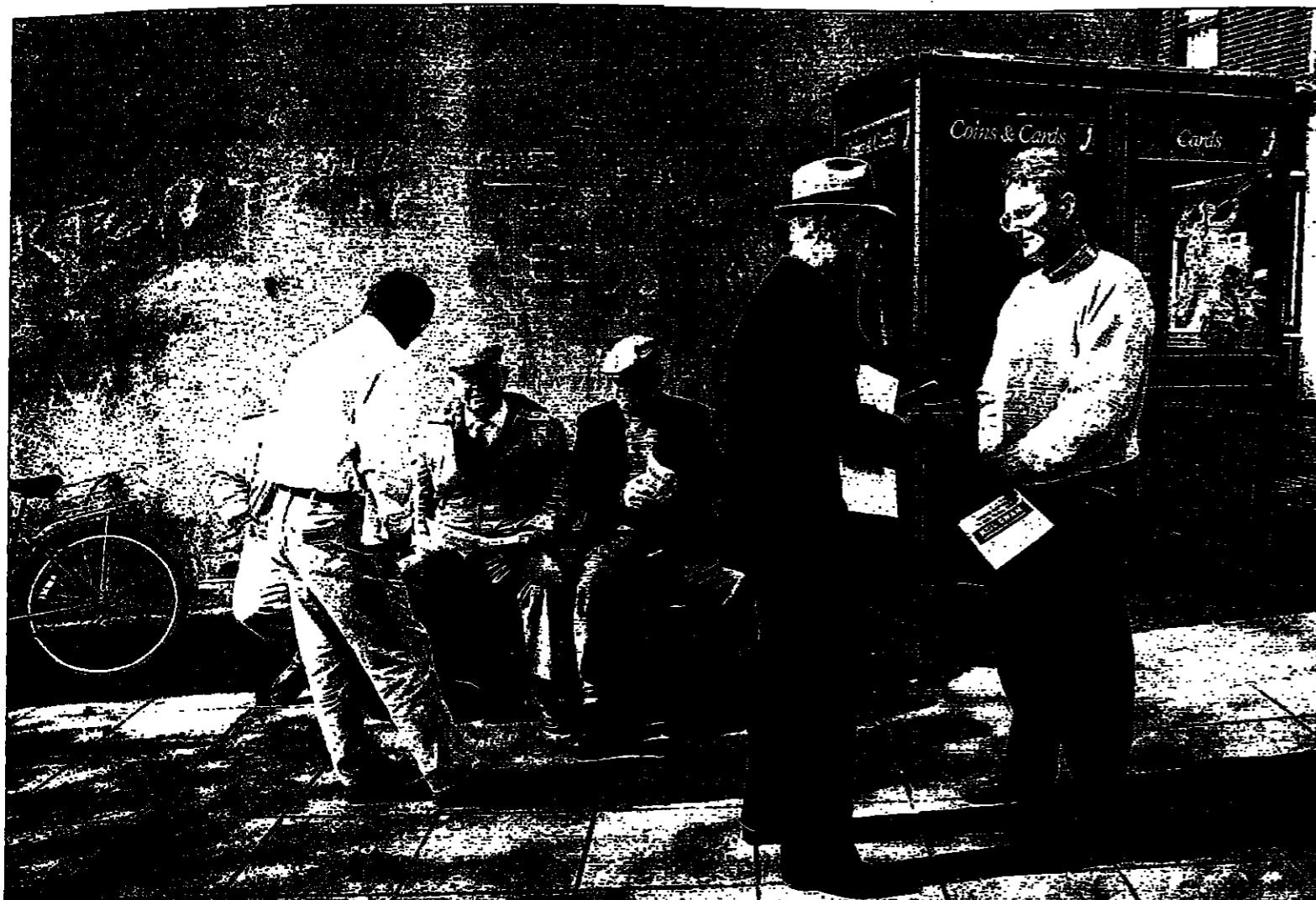
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'Donnygate' affair spawns its own anti-sleaze hero



Confidante candidate: Neil Swan, who is standing on an anti-sleaze Labour ticket, chatting to Doncaster voters yesterday. Photograph: David Rose

Christian Wolmar

Labour faces its own anti-sleaze candidate in Doncaster, which has achieved national notoriety with a local government scandal of growing proportions.

Neil Swan, a former Labour Doncaster candidate, is standing on an 'anti-sleaze Labour' ticket against Kevin Hughes, a junior Labour whip in the last Parliament and also a former Doncaster councillor.

The 'Donnygate' affair, which has been dubbed recently as 'the worst local government scandal since the Poulson affair', first came to light in January after the district auditor revealed he was questioning the validity of trips abroad and extravagant 'working' lunches by councillors.

Earlier this week, it was revealed that the police are

widening their inquiry to include land deals, contracts with a security firm and various other financial deals and the police are now setting up an office in the town hall.

Mr Swan said he wants to put pressure on the national party and to act as a focus for local concern about corruption at the council. A New Labour supporter, he wants to draw the national party's attention to what has been happening for many years in Doncaster.

Mr Swan was a councillor between 1987 and 1990 and fell foul of what he calls the ruling 'Mafia' on the council. He said: 'It started at the first meeting I went to, when I asked a few questions about the annual report, they didn't like that.'

An inner caucus of leading councillors, based originally around the National Union of

Mineworkers, the miners' community group, has long made the key decisions about what happens on Doncaster council, and Mr Swan fell foul of them: 'I discovered their existence by accident. I was driving a bit early, to a meeting, and I saw this bunch of councillors standing outside the local T&G office. They had obviously tried to get in for a meeting but the caretaker had locked them out. When they noticed me, they started jumping over hedges and trying to hide behind the building. It was hilarious.'

Thanks to a grant of £7,000 from the People's Trust, a fund created with a £2m donation by Mohamed Al Fayed, Mr Swan has an office, a fax and even a hired van. He hopes that there will be some money left over to sponsor candidates in the 1998 council elections, if the clean-

up of the council, which has started through the resignation of several leading councillors, has not been completed.

Out on the stump, Mr Swan drops into a group of women who live in terraced housing opposite a development site. They have complained about not receiving any information as roadworks and shops appeared opposite them, with no warning.

Two of them, Heather Wilson and Susan Arksey, have been badgering the council for two years but their letters get lost or they receive patronising replies. Mrs Wilson said: 'We started taking in our letters to the council to make sure they got there, but they refused to give us a receipt for them.'

In the market in Thorn, one of the small towns which make up much of the Doncaster North constituency, Mr Swan is greeted by supporters. He has become a repository for all complaints about the council, but there is, too, deep embarrassment about Donnygate.

'They seen these councillors plotting in the local club. They're like a coven of male witches,' says Frank Dallas, a pensioner, who is angry about recent figures showing some councillors getting more than £20,000 a year in expenses.

Yet, local Tories are surprisingly uninterested in exploiting the scandal. Peter Kemmerley, a candidate from Central Office casting – a City lawyer and Wandsworth councillor – reckons that Doncaster people will not react well to an outsider raising local sleaze: 'This is still the people's republic of South Yorkshire. People are very dependent on the council and don't dare criticise it.'

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Stephen Goodwin reports on the tussle for votes in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland



Food for thought: Charles Kennedy, Liberal-Democrat MP for Ross, Skye and Inverness, enjoying a tea and scone break on the campaign trail

Photograph: Brian Harris

Kennedy fights for his northern life

The notion of a Highlands and Islands group of Labour MPs' wielding a kind of crofters' block vote at Westminster sounds at first like revolutionary talk brought on by too many single malts downed in front of a peat fire.

But perhaps not. Labour candidates in the west of Scotland believe this election offers the best opportunity for decades of reviving the home-grown radical movement which grew out of the crofters' uprisings of the 1880s. Now, as then, land reform would be top of its agenda.

Two of the putative group are defending seats held in the last Parliament: Calum Macdonald in the Western Isles and Brian Wilson, Labour's campaign co-ordinator.

Lying south of the Clyde, Mr Wilson's Cunningham North constituency could hardly be de-

scribed as "Highland", though it does include the Isle of Arran. He is, however, a driving force behind the SNP's West Highland Free Press, who could be a voice in a Labour cabinet.

There has always been a distinctive Highland agenda – land ownership and transport are the main issues – but it is very rare for us to have an opportunity to push it to national prominence," Mr Wilson said.

The last time the Highlands

had two Labour MPs and their own party in office, the big spending Highland and Islands Development Board was set up. There has been no comparable initiative since.

The three other potential group members are in Liberal Democrat constituencies: James Hendry, an Inverness solicitor, probably stands least chance. He is up against the ver-

eran Bob Maclellan in Caithness, Sutherland, and Easter Ross, though interestingly when Mr Maclellan was won the seat in 1966 it was for Labour. He switched to the SDP in the 1980s.

Then there is David Stewart, a social worker and councillor, for "too-close-to-call" Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber. The retirement of Sir Russell Johnston has left the seat a four-way marginal on paper but most pundits think the SNP's Fergus Ewing, solicitor son of Winnie "Madame Ecosse" Ewing, is edging ahead.

Most Labour hopes are pinned on Donnie Munro, front man for the Gaelic rock band Runrig, who is challenging Charles Kennedy in Ross, Skye and Inverness West.

Boundary changes have cost Mr Kennedy natural voters in East Ross and added Labour

wards in Inverness, the SNP's Margaret Paterson is likely to pick up votes in her home area of Dingwall, and there are malicious whispers that after 14 years as an engaging television star for a party unlikely to gain power he might prefer to concentrate on broadcasting. His dismissal of the rumour is unprintable, nevertheless he does not seem convinced by the "Oh you'll be okay" confidence he hears on doorsteps.

Mr Munro is not only a native of Skye, with nearly a quarter of the seat's 56,000 voters, but has cult status among the young right across Scotland. Some 50,000 watched the band at an open air concert by Loch Lomond in 1991.

Watching him argue Labour's case at cottage doors on the island of Raasay, off Skye, in his black coat and boots, he looks like an Amish preacher come to

call. His message certainly has a religious fervour.

Just as he believes Runrig's music has given Gaelic a greater cultural confidence,

now, aged 42, he wants to help empower the Islands and Highlands politically.

"We have been in a backwater politically for too long. The Liberals may appear inoffensive and quasi-independent but over 30 years they have proved utterly ineffectual," he said.

For inspiration, Mr Munro had only to look across the

Sound of Raasay to Braes, on Skye, where a memorial commemorates the last battle fought on British soil.

In 1882 crofters incensed by rents fought a pitched battle with a squad of sheriff's men.

Several people were imprisoned and fined at Inverness. But

though the battle was lost, the campaign was a success. Crofters secured rights of tenure and for a time elected their own MPs – a piece of misty-eyed history which just might repeat itself.

Labour's lottery to help the NHS

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A £1bn "People's Lottery" fund to support education and health projects would be set up by a Labour government, Tony Blair said yesterday.

The Labour leader joked that while his party could not guarantee that people would win the lottery, he would guarantee that their money went to the causes they really cared about.

He told an election press conference that the fund would be created from the proceeds of the current National Lottery mid-week draw over five years, and would be used to pay for new projects that fell outside services normally financed by taxation. "It will not substitute for what the taxpayer does," he said. "It will add to what people get."

But Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for National Heritage, claimed that the Labour scheme would threaten the success of the National Lottery, increase bureaucracy and undermine the concept that it should only fund projects additional to those already met by central government.

"Labour pledge the same money over and over again to different projects," she said. "The only clear thing is that their figures do not add up and it would all end in tears."

Illustrating the type of projects that would benefit, Mr Blair said some of the cash would be used to make sure that teachers had the skills to deal with computers in the classroom; finance children's after-school learning programmes; and set up healthy living centres. Labour was also planning to use the "People's Lottery" fund to finance a national talent endowment scheme for science,

technology and the arts, fostering new talent for the future. The endowment scheme, supported at the press conference by Rachel Portman, Oscar-winning composer of the music for the film *Emma*, and Anthony Minghella, director of the Oscar-winning film *The English Patient*, could be earning copyright revenues by 2001.

Miriam Stoppard, the writer and broadcaster, backed the plans for healthy-living centres; a network offering fitness checks and routines, and advice on diet and health, located in high streets, shopping centres and leisure centres.

Labour's national heritage spokesman, Jack Cunningham, said: "The lottery is very effective at raising cash, but people believe more of it should go to the things they think are important and which make a real difference to their lives."

"If the benefits are to be fully realised there must be a new, better approach to the allocation of the funds. We must ensure a more effective and equitable system for lottery awards. Awards such as £1.5m for the Churchill papers and financial support for Eton College caused public outrage."

Dr Cunningham also said that there were enormous regional disparities in the allocation of lottery money, and, under Labour, existing funding bodies would be expected to demonstrate commitment to a geographically-fair distribution.

Existing rules worked against less prosperous areas and communities, he said. They would be made more flexible and Labour would also set up "Community Chests" across the country, enabling more people at a local level to influence the distribution and allocation of funds.

Mayday! Mayday! It's too late.

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EMU membership: European Commission says 13 countries, including Britain, will make the grade

Italy fails first test to join single currency

Sarah Helm
Brussels

The European Commission yesterday declared Italy unfit to join the single currency, based on present economic forecasts, causing a stir in Brussels and creating political ructions in Rome.

The row over Italy's failure so far to make the Euro-grade gave a foretaste of the bitter divisions which will break out across Europe when the final rulings on which countries qualify to join the single currency are made next year.

Prior to release of the data, the Italian government, headed by Romano Prodi, who has staked his future on bringing Italy into the single currency at the launch, was widely reported to have exerted pressure on the Commission to alter the figures. Emma Bonino, the Italian commissioner for consumer affairs, protested vigorously over the Commission's findings.

On other fronts, however, the Commission's outlook was surprisingly optimistic. Figures showed that a total of 13 countries – including Germany, France, Britain and Spain – will meet the key economic test, which requires countries to bring their public deficits down to 3 per cent of gross domestic product.

This was many more than indicated by separate forecasts yesterday from the International Monetary Fund. In its

view, seen as far more realistic by the financial markets, France, Germany, the UK and Spain will also just miss the 3 per cent target.

There is slower progress on the reduction of debt in the Commission's forecast, but it clearly believes its optimistic new growth forecast of 2.4 per cent for this year will help most countries turn the corner.

Both Spain and Portugal are also expected to make the grade, although many analysts predict that it would be politically impossible for Europe to refuse entry to Italy, a founder member, while accepting Spain and Portugal.

Yesterday's Commission figures were awaited with unprecedent interest as the deadline for decision-time on economic and monetary union draws nearer. Decisions on which countries qualify will be based on economic figures for this year, and will be made at a special council of heads of state and government in May next year, ahead of the launch on January 1st 1999.

Britain, which is expected to have brought its deficit down to 2.9 per cent of GDP this year, is now highly likely to qualify, unless other states continue to insist that the requirement to be part of the exchange rate mechanism is strictly enforced.

During the increasingly Euro-sceptic debate characterising the British election cam-

paign, both main parties argue that Britain must continue to "wait and see" before deciding whether to join EMU at the launch, giving the electorate the impression that decision-time for Britain still lies some way off.

However, as yesterday's announcement in Brussels reaffirmed, most other member states are already lining up at the starting gate.

Under the Maastricht Treaty, Britain must notify its partners of whether it wishes to be considered for membership of the EMU by the end of this year.

Any suggestion that Europe is "fudging" the convergence criteria in the final months will be seized on by British Eurosceptics as further grounds to stay outside and will also spur conflict between other member states.

Yesterday Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the economic commissioner, rejected suggestions that there had been any "tinkering or trading" with the figures, and presented his experts' findings as proof that Europe was now "well on the road" to the EMU launch.

However, suspicions about the way the Commission has calculated its forecasts remain.

Yesterday Mr de Silguy was

challenged to justify how the Commission could have produced such a long list of qualifiers, in view of more cautious economic forecasts, from other expert bodies.

IMF world forecast, page 21

There could have been no clearer sign of the helplessness of the Italian government: when the European Commission announced yesterday that Italy was at the bottom of the class of countries hoping to qualify for the single European currency, scarcely anyone had the strength to sound indignant.

Qualifying for monetary union on time has been the policy backbone of Romano Prodi's government, and failure will almost certainly spell its downfall. But yesterday the politicians could barely put a brave public face on the Commission's conclusions. Only Mr Prodi had the courage to call them "incomprehensible". The financial markets barely reacted.

According to the Commission's calculations, Italy will be close but not close enough to the 3-per-cent deficit-to-Gross-Domestic-Product ratio stipulated by the Maastricht treaty by the end of this year. It is then set to slide backwards towards a ratio of 3.9 per cent in 1998.

The Commission report did not rule out Italy's chances, but it made clear that further deep structural changes the economy would be necessary to put the country back in the running.

The report was a stinging assault to Italy's pride. It is hardly flattering for a G7 country to be relegated below Spain and Portugal and left floundering just above Greece in the European pecking order.

The writing has been on the wall for some time. Because of the byzantine and contradictory architecture of Italy's governing coalition, last month's mini-budget completely failed to deliver the austerity medicine that was needed, resorting instead to statistical manipulations that fooled nobody.

The same political difficulties almost scuppered the Italian-led intervention force which is now in Albania – an operation intended to boost Italy's international credibility but which has turned into a banana-skin hell.

The latest slip-up was a cruel but accurate illustration of the government's general discomfit: the Italian flagship, the *Vittorio Veneto*, spent all of Tuesday and part of yesterday stuck on a windswept sandbank outside the port of Vlorë.

Mr Prodi's only chance of survival is to undertake a massive reform of the bloated, inefficient welfare state by the end of the year. His government is willing, but the party on which he depends for his majority in the

lower house of parliament, Rifondazione Comunista, opposes any cuts in public spending in the name of monetary union.

Two likely scenarios present themselves. According to the first, the impasse continues, Italy is left out of Europe and the government falls. According to the second, the Prodi government draws up a welfare reform programme, Rifondazione votes against, and a crisis looms. The centre-right opposition then comes to the rescue, offers to vote for the welfare reform package but insists on the government's resignation as the price.

Either way, Mr Prodi's days are numbered. Whether Italy's prospects in Europe can be salvaged while his supporters set about the task of dumping him remains to be seen.

Leading article, page 17

Euro-rebuke wounds Prodi's pride

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

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The report was a stinging assault to Italy's pride. It is hardly flattering for a G7 country to be relegated below Spain and Portugal and left floundering just above Greece in the European pecking order.

The writing has been on the wall for some time. Because of the byzantine and contradictory architecture of Italy's governing coalition, last month's mini-budget completely failed to deliver the austerity medicine that was needed, resorting instead to statistical manipulations that fooled nobody.

The same political difficulties almost scuppered the Italian-led intervention force which is now in Albania – an operation intended to boost Italy's international credibility but which has turned into a banana-skin hell.

The latest slip-up was a cruel but accurate illustration of the government's general discomfit: the Italian flagship, the *Vittorio Veneto*, spent all of Tuesday and part of yesterday stuck on a windswept sandbank outside the port of Vlorë.

Mr Prodi's only chance of survival is to undertake a massive reform of the bloated, inefficient welfare state by the end of the year. His government is willing, but the party on which he depends for his majority in the

lower house of parliament, Rifondazione Comunista, opposes any cuts in public spending in the name of monetary union.

Two likely scenarios present themselves. According to the first, the impasse continues, Italy is left out of Europe and the government falls. According to the second, the Prodi government draws up a welfare reform programme, Rifondazione votes against, and a crisis looms. The centre-right opposition then comes to the rescue, offers to vote for the welfare reform package but insists on the government's resignation as the price.

Either way, Mr Prodi's days are numbered. Whether Italy's prospects in Europe can be salvaged while his supporters set about the task of dumping him remains to be seen.

Leading article, page 17

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the grade

Saddam's clan get full treatment at Uday's bedside

Patrick Cockburn

It was a tense meeting. Earlier this year Saddam Hussein gathered the closest members of his family – the inner core of his regime – around the hospital bedside of Uday, his eldest son, paralysed by a bullet in the spine after an assassination attempt last December.

The Iraqi leader told his relatives who had come to the Ibn Sina hospital that their "craving for people's property" had become the talk of Iraq. He said their behaviour was damaging him and his regime. Pointing to Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of the Iraqi leader famous for his brutality, the President said he had "played an important role in prompting me to make the decision to enter Kuwait". And once installed as governor of Iraq's new, 19th province, in 1990, he said: "You looted half the valuable looted in Kuwait". He reminded Ali Hassan that he was once a "driver in Kirkuk".

Others got an equally rough ride. Half-brother Sabawi was meant to be a director of the security services but "he goes to his office at 11am, half asleep". President Saddam utters vague threats against his other half-brother Barzan, Iraq's ambas-

sador in Geneva since 1988, saying: "I should not have left him all this time." Even Uday, facing a dangerous operation to remove the bullet in his body, is asked: "Are you a politician, a trader, a people's leader or a playboy?"

The transcript of the meeting was first published by the London-based magazine *al-Wasat* and has become the subject of intense discussion among Iraqi opponents of the regime. Who leaked the document, and why? President Saddam himself is the most likely culprit. His criticisms seem carefully scripted to show many of the nastier episodes in Iraq's recent history were not, as had been imagined, the fault of Saddam Hussein himself, but of his greedy relatives.

For instance, Gen Omar al-Hazza, a member of the Iraqi leader's clan known for his denunciations of the regime when in his cups at the officers club in Baghdad, was executed in 1990. Saddam Hussein was blamed. But this turns out to have been unfair. Addressing Ali Hassan al-Majid, the Iraqi leader says: "It was you and Hussein Kamel [another son-in-law murdered last year when he unwisely returned to Baghdad from exile in Amman] who

caused me to execute Omar al-Hazza and his sons." It was they who had the house of Gen al-Hazza in Baghdad demolished by a bulldozer.

On the face of it, the Iraqi leader is past rehabilitation. So what good will it do him? The President may not know the extent to which he has entered Western demonology. A Palestinian leader who met him said he did not know he had appeared on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*. He excitedly asked the Palestinian to get copies of the magazines from his hotel.

President Saddam throws an interesting light on the politics

of his inner family. He relates how the governor of Kirkuk, a city in north-east Iraq, telephoned him because he had stopped trucks smuggling grain into Iran. These turned out to belong to Ali Hassan al-Majid. Another target is his third half-brother, Watban, former interior minister, shot through the leg by Uday at a drunken party on the banks of the Tigris in 1995. He says: "The Interior Ministry was ruined during your term." President Saddam mentions that he had fined him, presumably for corruption.

Up until 1995 Saddam Hus-

sein's family seemed determined to stick together. Then Uday shot his uncle Watban through the leg and Hussein Kamel fled to Jordan. He was killed on his return last year. Five months ago a relative of Gen al-Hazza told gunmen where they could find Uday one night in Baghdad. He survived, but is crippled.

President Saddam may want to reassess control over his family. He may have hoped also that by spreading the blame for past atrocities, he may persuade the world to be more accommodating to him in future.



Goldfinger: A lavishly dressed Uday recovering after his operation in the Ibn Sina hospital in Baghdad. Photograph: AP

S pride

Yeltsin signs China friendship treaty

Helen Womack
Moscow

Russia and China, closer now than at any time since the doomed Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s, yesterday issued a joint declaration on strategic co-operation for the 21st century. They denied they were uniting against any particular country but, in calling for a "multi-polar world" in which no nation played a dominant role, they

clearly implied criticism of the United States, the only remaining superpower.

The historic agreement was signed when the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, met Boris Yeltsin in the gilded hall of the Grand Kremlin Palace. "We have not signed such a document with any other country," said Mr Yeltsin, who has been

trying to diversify Russian foreign policy since failing to persuade Nato against the need for eastward expansion.

The 66-year-old Russian leader lacked his usual verve at the signing ceremony, but Michael De Bakey, the American surgeon who acted as a consultant during his heart operation last November, said

that flu was the problem, not further heart trouble.

President Yeltsin and his guest from Peking expressed their concern over the attempt at enlarging and strengthening military blocks because such a tendency may ... aggravate regional and global tension."

Instead of this, their declaration said, it was time for a new

world order. "The Cold War has ended. The bipolar system has ceased to exist. The positive trend towards a multipolar world is accelerating. All countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community. No country should seek hegemony, practise power politics or monopolise international affairs."

The extracts of the document which were made available to the press contained few concrete details on how to achieve this goal. But the two presidents stressed the importance of the United Nations, and also called for continuing disarmament.

Today, together with the leaders of the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, they will sign a treaty cutting armed forces along the former Soviet-Chinese frontier.

It was here, 28 years ago, that relations between the two Communist giants reached rock bottom. After Stalin and Mao had worked enthusiastically together in the 1950s, supporting North Korea in its war with the South, the Soviet Union and China became bitter ideologi-

cal foes in the 1960s and even came to blows on their common border in 1969.

But Mikhail Gorbachev healed the rift by visiting Peking in 1989 and relations have been steadily warming since. Russia, which has had more success reforming itself politically than economically, is fascinated by China, which has made an economic breakthrough while leaving its monolithic Communist system more or less intact.

The Kremlin hopes to use this week's five-day visit by President Jiang to show the West that, since Nato insists on expanding against its wishes, Russia has no choice but to widen the range of its friendships. China yesterday complained about Bill Clinton's decision to meet the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, which it sees as another example of the kind of US moralising which has pushed it into the arms of a less judgemental Russia.

Aides to Mr Yeltsin were at pains to stress, however, that Russo-Chinese co-operation stopped short of a formal alliance and was not aimed against any third country. "The very suggestion of plans to create some counter blocks are wrong and counter productive," said the Kremlin spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky.

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AP - Ankara

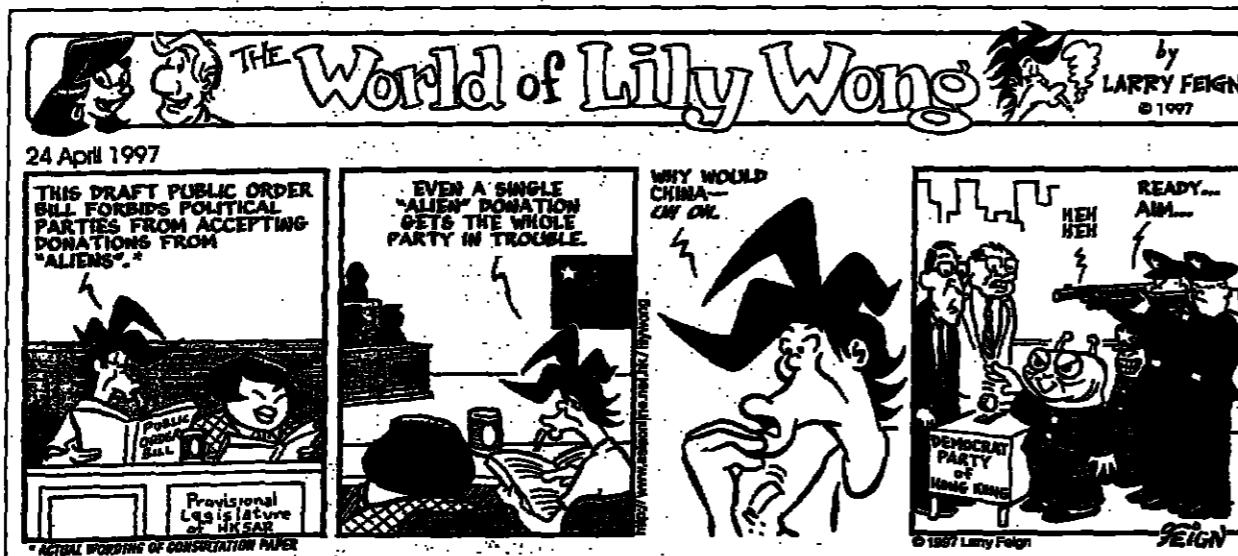
Race-attack Germans jailed

A German court yesterday sentenced two young thugs to 15 and eight-year jail terms for a racist attack on Italian building workers which left one of the victims paralysed and barely able to speak. The court in Potsdam near Berlin found both men guilty of attempted murder for attacking the Italians with a baseball bat in the town of Trebbin last September after setting out on what the presiding judge called a "real manhunt".

Reuters - Potsdam

Pulitzer columnist critical

The Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Mike Royko, whose commentaries appear in newspapers across the United States, was in critical condition yesterday after suffering a seizure at his home, a hospital said. Reuters - Chicago



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Clinton starts campaign to expand Nato east

The Clinton administration formally launched its campaign to win US Senate support for Nato enlargement, with the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, ruling out compromise with Russia on a key demand blocking an alliance security agreement with Moscow. "Russia would also like us to make absolute commitments in the (proposed Russia-Nato) charter about the deployment of nuclear and conventional forces on the territory's new members. But we will not compromise on this issue," she told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Reuters - Washington

Rebels accused of massacre

Zairean villagers said Tutsi-dominated rebels slaughtered many Rwandan Hutu refugees at camps south of Kisangani and said workers said they had reports that up to 55,000 refugees had fled. The villagers, travelling towards Kisangani, said a pitched battle between rebels and refugees accompanied the slaughter on Tuesday at camps near Kasese village, 25 km (15 miles) south of Kisangani. Reuters - Luanda

Embattled politician backed

Thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews in black hats and suits rallied yesterday in support of the religious-party leader Arich Deri, the only politician expected to be charged in a high-level influence-trading scandal. "If he was guilty, all the others would have been guilty," said Yehuda Cohen, a 16-year-old seminary student. "This is discrimination against a religious man." Mr Deri, leader of the religious Shas party, is expected to be indicted on extortion charges. The Attorney-General said there was not enough evidence to charge the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, or the Justice Minister, Tzachi Hanegbi, who were also linked to the scandal. AP - Jerusalem

Cultists trained in Russia

Members of the Japanese Aum Shinri Kyo doomsday cult, which is accused of staging a deadly nerve-gas attack on Tokyo subways, underwent military training in Russia, a Russian investigator said yesterday. Senior investigator Boris Uvarov, of the state prosecutor's office, said a "whole chain of generals" used to arrange military workouts for wealthy foreigners at army bases in the years that followed the Soviet collapse. Aum used the opportunity to provide certain members with combat training, he said. The Russian generals "leased their practice grounds for alleged touring programmes. Foreigners enjoy firing the Kalashnikov sub-machine-guns, flying on their helicopters, parachute-jumping – suit yourselves, just pay," Mr Uvarov said. AP - Moscow

Floodwaters recede

The level of muddy floodwater crept downwards yesterday, helping a National Guard sandbagging blitz save a power station that keeps a few lights burning brightly in what remains of this submerged city. The Red River has been falling since early Tuesday and was down to 53.5 feet (16.3m) yesterday, said the US Geological Survey. AP - Grand Forks, North Dakota

Hostage relatives end visit

Relatives of Western tourists kidnapped by Kashmiri separatists nearly two years ago ended their four-day visit to Kashmir valley yesterday with little success in learning the hostages' fate. "We don't know the truth whether the hostages are alive or dead. That's the position of the government as well," Julie Mangan, whose husband, Keith Mangan, is among the missing men, told reporters. AP - Srinagar

Ciller warns off military

The Deputy Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, yesterday told the military to stay out of politics. Turkey's military, which sees itself as the guardian of the country's secular tradition, has been at loggerheads for months with the Islamic-led government. Ms Ciller, whose True Path party is part of the Islamic-led coalition government, said in a speech that "politics is the job of elected politicians."

AP - Ankara

Race-attack Germans jailed

A German court yesterday sentenced two young thugs to 15 and eight-year jail terms for a racist attack on Italian building workers which left one of the victims paralysed and barely able to speak. The court in Potsdam near Berlin found both men guilty of attempted murder for attacking the Italians with a baseball bat in the town of Trebbin last September after setting out on what the presiding judge called a "real manhunt".

Reuters - Potsdam

Pulitzer columnist critical

The Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Mike Royko, whose commentaries appear in newspapers across the United States, was in critical condition yesterday after suffering a seizure at his home, a hospital said. Reuters - Chicago

obituaries / gazette

Denis Compton

Denis Compton was not only one of cricket's finest batsmen but as great an entertainer as the sport has seen. Perhaps no man, and certainly no sportsman, did more for English morale than Compton and his batting in the aftermath of the Second World War. During the long hot summer of 1947, which followed an unfairly ferocious winter, he nourished the nation in no small way by enjoying – so visibly – a more opulent season than anyone has known in the history of the first class game. It is no exaggeration to say that Compton brought back a feeling of gaiety to a ravaged people as no propaganda film, or even Churchillian speech, could have done.

In his summer of summers Compton scored 3,816 first class runs, at an average of 90.85 per innings, which surpassed by some 300 runs the old aggregate by Tom Hayward: while his 18 centuries surpassed the 16 made by Sir Jack Hobbs in 1925. (Both records will be impossible to beat so long as the English season retains its present shape.)

Most of his runs were made in the name of Middlesex or of England, but in anything other than the literal sense they were scored on behalf of all cricket followers in the country. For in his prime Compton was the most daring, and spectacular, exponent of that old-fashioned cricket which was played below the height of the balls, without thigh or chest protector, let alone a helmet. And the joy that he generated was the more, as he little knew the effect he had.

His "Middlesex Twin", Bill Edrich (who died in 1986), was almost as effective in 1947. But, as R.C. Robertson-Glasgow wrote at the time: "Compton is poetry; Edrich is prose, robust and clear." Together they were partners in many an adventure, not only their third-wicket stand of 370 for England against South Africa in 1947, or their 424 for Middlesex against Somerset in 1948, both records which still stand. When on tour they roistered with a vitality which the tabloids today would never allow in English cricketers. The jest was made that "Compo" was best man at Bill Edrich's third wedding, and third man at his best wedding.

The tourists in 1947 were the South Africans, for whom Compton always had a special affinity (his first wife, Doris, came from there). In the five Tests, but only eight innings, he hit them for four centuries, while his aggregate of 753 remains a record for an England

player in a home series. But again it was the way he batted which mattered most, for he communicated his enjoyment to the largest crowds which have ever flocked to English cricket. If his style can be defined, it was a cross between the classicism of Wally Hammond and the eccentricity of Derek Randall, as Compton made his way down the pitch to sweep the spinners or cover-drive the quicker bowlers, before flicking back the famous Brylcreem hair and giving another boyish grin.

Not only casual spectators, but critics who should have been better informed, made the false assumption that Compton's brilliance was straight from nature. In fact he worked immensely hard to develop his gifts, when a boy on the MCC ground staff at Lord's. In his autobiography, *End of an Inning* (1958), he wrote:

Even those of my shots that cricket writers most like to describe as unorthodox – for instance, my habit of walking running down the pitch to spinners – have been practised hour after hour, day after day, in the nets. I used to go on to succeed in both cricket and football to have more to chance than was absolutely necessary.

Even before he joined the Lord's staff at the age of 15, Compton had been marked down as a special talent. The previous summer he had played his first game at Lord's, as captain of an Elementary Schools XI, and scored 114 in front of Sir Pelham Warner. Bowling in the nets at MCC members, he also learnt left-arm unorthodox spin, with which he was to take 622 first class wickets at an average of 32, although he was always too erratic for the highest level. In the winters he was on the Arsenal ground staff, trying to emulate Cliff Bastin and Alex James at Highbury, as well as Patsy Hendren and Jack Hearns at Lord's.

Making his first class debut for Middlesex when not quite 18, Compton went on to reach 1,000 runs in 1936, the youngest to have done so. The following season, when 19, he was capped by England against New Zealand, and was run out for 65: but for all the image of scattiness, he was run out only twice more in his Test career. In 1938 he and Len Hutton were introduced as young blood against Australia, and both made centuries in the first Test (Compton was dropped by Don Bradman before he had scored). But England were not to regain the Ashes until 1953, when Compton made the winning hit at the Oval.

Generally, though, Compton was not ideally suited to Test cricket with Australia, admitting that the game as played by Bradman – and subsequently by Hutton – was too ruthless and too negative for his liking. He had a technical weakness too, moving too far over to the off-side when leg-glancing and hitting the ball in the air. He averaged 50 in Tests over all, but only 42 against Australia, whereas Hutton against the oldest enemy maintained the same average of 56 that he had overall. After the war, if not before, Hutton settled for effectiveness while Compton could not help retain some sense of fun. It is extraordinary, and yet in this sense appropriate, that Hutton and Compton only once stayed together long enough to share a century partnership in Test cricket, and that was against the West Indies in 1939.

Still,

of Compton's finest innings did come against Australia, most notably his two centuries in 1948. In the Nottingham Test, having missed a sweep in his first innings and been bowled for 0, he scored 184 and was close to saving the game when he slipped and fell on his wicket. In the third at Old Trafford he was hit on the head by Ray Lindwall, to return after stitches as a bandaged hero and to inspire England from 119 for 5 wickets to 363 all out. He himself finished on 145 not out, although Lindwall in his flower shop in Brisbane years later pointed out that Compton had been hit by a slower ball which he had top-edged.

The deterioration of Compton's right knee affected his later performances against all countries. The trouble had started when he had collided with the Charlton Athletic goalkeeper in 1938-39, but did not really trouble him until the winter of 1949-50, his last in professional football. Weeks after his Arsenal career had culminated in an FA Cup medal as their left-wing, he had some bone removed from his right knee and was left with reduced mobility. In 1950-51 Compton suffered one of the worst series by any England batsmen when he averaged seven against Australia. After 1949, although relatively consistent, he hit only four more Test centuries before his retirement in 1957.

He became a cricket writer for the *Sunday Express*, where he needed less journalistic help than some former players, and a commentator for BBC Television, until his voice sounded a little too well lubricated. In later life his pronouncements on South Africa became ever more extreme, until he, Bill Edrich and the right-wing MP John Carlisle joined in calling on the MCC to send a touring party to South Africa during their exclusion from world cricket. To some extent he knew not what he did, for he had seen only the best of the country as a white touring Test cricketer in the Forties and Fifties.

If he became a typical case of a sportsman to be seen and not heard, Compton should be long remembered for what he did on the field. As Robertson-Glasgow wrote of Compton and Edrich at the end of their unique summer: "They go together in English cricket, as Gilbert and Sullivan go together in English opera. Nor is the analogy so careless as you might suppose... In the art of giving pleasure to English audiences, both pains lack rival."

Or, in the words of Sir Neville Cardus:

When cricket was begun again, after the Hitler war, Compton in his wonderful years of 1946-47 expressed by his critics the same admiration and hope of a last great nation that had come out of the dark abyss.

In a period still sore and shabby and rationed, Compton spread his

happy favours everywhere. The crowds sat in the sun, liberating from simony and privation. The strain of long years of affliction fell from all shoulders as Compton set the ball rolling or speeding or rippling right and left, as he leaned to it and swept it from the off round the leg boundary, as he danced forward or danced back, his hair dashed beyond the pacifying limits of any cravat or unspent wicket-keeper... yet the crowd summed themselves as much in Compton's batting as in the beneficial rays coming from the blue sky.

Men and women, boys and girls, cheered him to his century, and ran every one of his runs with him.

Scyld Berry

Although I used to watch Denis Compton play cricket bewitchingly at Lord's in the early Fifties, I didn't meet him until 40 years later when I was commissioned to write his biography, writes Tim Heald.

As Robertson-Glasgow wrote of Compton and Edrich at the end of their unique summer: "They go together in English cricket, as Gilbert and Sullivan go together in English opera. Nor is the analogy so careless as you might suppose... In the art of giving pleasure to English audiences, both pains lack rival."

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Men and women, boys and girls, cheered him to his century, and ran every one of his runs with him.

"That man," he said, "will never walk again."

Whatever I went with him he was recognized to the point of adulation. I remember walking out of lunch at the Travellers' Club and a whole centre table of ex-ambassadors rising as a man as a mark of respect. Denis, though gratified, was incredulous. And I recall the naughty-boy grin when, at an Johnston's wake, he was asked if he'd like a drink and replied, "It's all right, old boy. The Prime Minister's getting me one." Cue for John Major with a glass of red wine. Denis loved to give pleasure but I am not sure he ever understood quite how much he gave.

David Sheppard, best of all cricketer clerics, told me that as a schoolboy in Denis's miraculous summer of 1947 he batted and batted in the nets, hoping that, by constant practice, he might one day bat like Hutton, but knowing that, no matter what, "I could never bat like Compton."

From possibly the most famous Englishman of his generation.

We spent a lot of time together over the next months, often over lunch. He was wonderful company, indefatigable, modest and touchingly brave. That kneecap of his which so blighted his career is preserved in a biscuit tin at Lord's, like a saint's relic – which in a sense it is – though Denis blanched at the mere mention of so gruesome a souvenir. Shortly after one of his gritty comeback innings a specialist was shown an X-ray of the Compton knee.

It became a typical case of a sportsman to be seen and not heard. Compton should be long remembered for what he did on the field. As Robertson-Glasgow wrote of Compton and Edrich at the end of their unique summer: "They go together in English cricket, as Gilbert and Sullivan go together in English opera. Nor is the analogy so careless as you might suppose... In the art of giving pleasure to English audiences, both pains lack rival."

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Death of ideology is greatly exaggerated

Not even the most numb-kneed Tory party sycophant would call John Major an original thinker. Wily tactician, maybe, but not a Tory leader you would put in the same category as Arthur Balfour or Lord Salisbury. Paddy Ashdown, likewise, is not someone who comes across as a conceptualiser. When we wrote, not critically, that the Liberal Democrats were a party with many ideas rather than an ideology, Conrad (Lord) Russell took us to task, claiming lineal descent from John Stuart Mill. If so, the party has descended through various rustic branch-lines: its family resemblance to its famous predecessor is less marked than Lord Russell's to his. Mr Ashdown does not spend much time debating the essence of democratic liberalism or liberal democracy for that matter.

The Labour leader is another matter. Tony Blair is no continental intellectual. We do not breed party leaders with the theoretical clout of, say, the former German social democrat leader Helmut Schmidt or the academic weight of the French socialist Lionel Jospin. Yet before the demands of electioneering took him over, Mr Blair could be spied at seminars convened by the Institute of Public Policy Research and similar think-tanks. Then, the occasional "ism" could be heard tripping off his tongue even if, somewhat too often, it emerged as the vague "communitarianism". But the campaign has in large measure seen the

Labour leader staying safely away from big ideas and keeping his bar straight. Until that is, the past couple of days. Suddenly Tony Blair seems to have been cut loose. He has taken to the stage without a script, doing something extraordinary, in the terms in which this campaign has been conducted till now, which is thinking aloud. What his audiences have been hearing is a kind of public meditation - Prince Hal-like - on the duties of leadership and his rendezvous with history. Taken at face value (too much should not be read into what is said during these hectic days), his recent remarks suggest Mr Blair has yet more surprises in store for his party, including perhaps its intellectual demise.

The gist of Mr Blair's political thought was captured yesterday in his prediction that "this election will be the last fought on ideology". By "ideology" he meant the old way of dividing right and left on how large a role they accord the state. On one side stood individualists, on the other collectivists; on one capitalists, on the other socialists.

That such division is anachronistic is an old suggestion. At the end of the 1950s Daniel Bell used the phrase to signal the onset of an era in which everyone accepted the existence of the welfare state. Other writers took up the theme, claiming that modern politics was essentially a technocratic affair in which all the public had to do was decide which party would manage the system



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best. Tony Blair seems attracted by this idea. Appraise my suitability - he implies - on the basis of my party management skills. Perhaps he has been reading Francis Fukuyama, American author of the cloudy *The End of History*. Fukuyama argued that at the end of the Cold War, a liberal-democratic model of politics now rules mankind, conflicts within which are essentially trivial. There remain practical problems, to be sure, in economic and social life but these are duly second-order ones, which need to be approached pragmatically. Fukuyama's book was a strange mixture of triumphalism and gloom. It was

heavily influenced by Nietzsche (this newspaper is against Nietzsche) but was, in its turn, heavily influential on a rising generation which believes that all is management, nothing is ideology. Support what works; that's it. This, in essence, is what President Clinton was saying in his State of the Union address earlier this year.

No one sensible is against practical solutions or good management. But it is a dangerous leap to think that, therefore, politics in the old sense is dead. However it is labelled, and wherever it is conducted, from ancient Athens to contemporary Seoul, politics

exists because society involves conflict. There is conflict for power, resources and freedom. There is conflict between groups and individuals, some of whom will win and some lose. Politics is a grown-up art because politics recognises this and doesn't shy from it: only in the schmaltz dreamland of dictators and king-emperors is there no conflict, a harmonious and happily managed people. So long as there are limited resources and complex social organisation, with power centralised and rules imposed, there will be politics.

And the real problem for modern politicians is this: without ideology, without an intellectual template, how do you know which groups should win and which, at least relatively, lose? How do you make sense of a chaos of small managerial dilemmas? Without a compass, how do you know where you are going? Tory nationalists have an ideology, which defends traditional centres of national power against globalisation. They may be wrong-headed but they will be able to know when they are winning. The same went for the old left. But what is the core political focus for the new centre-left, whether it be American Democrats or British New Labour?

We think the key idea is, or ought to be, radicalism, meaning a determination to break down excessive centres of power (which could be in European bureaucracies, trade unions, multinational corporations, media empires or

pension funds) in favour of the small guy. Radical politics would recognise that in the global market there is a natural tendency for power to cluster around fewer and fewer players; and that the proper role for politicians is to stand against that, to constantly shake up and break up, in order to protect social diversity and mobility. It may seem an abstract thought. In government, it wouldn't be. We are all for management: but every management needs a guiding purpose.

Lachrymal Latins

The exam results were posted at the Brussels Academy yesterday, and one member of the Class of '99 has dissolved in tears. Italy, the country that gave us the Roman Empire, Michelangelo and the cappuccino, has failed to clear the first hurdle for entry to the University of the Euro. The only other country which does not appear on the "pass" list posted by the European Commission is Greece, the school drop-out. They were only mock exams, of course, and there were cries that the teachers had been too soft. But they were a dry run for life-altering tests coming very soon; and on them, the future of the continent may rest.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hospitals fail to accept the fact of death

Sir: It was with great sadness and depressing familiarity that we read John Hoyland's account of his stepfather's final illness ("Thanks, NHS, for a rotten way to die", 22 April), endured in the context of a health service seemingly ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of illness in old age.

As health professionals specialising in the care of older people we recognise the failings of a service where measures of "success" are increasingly based on performance rather than quality, and attention to detail is eclipsed by the pressure to "get the job done".

It is tempting to lay blame at the door of health professionals, managers or even politicians, but to do so would be missing the point.

Mr Hoyland's account is more an indictment of our attitudes to ageing, and the inadequacies of the NHS are perhaps a paradigm of the ageism which abounds in society.

DR MARTIN VERNON
SUSAN JACKSON
Newbury Park, Essex

Sir: I would like to endorse John Hoyland's moving article about his stepfather's illness with regard to the total incapacity of the NHS to acknowledge the fact of death.

An elderly tenant whom we looked after in the final years of his life went into hospital about six weeks ago with bronchial pneumonia. After a few days he contracted an infection and was moved to an isolated ward. After a few days in hospital it was quite clear to us that he was dying. On one occasion we made an inquiry as to his condition. "Oh he's doing fine, he's sitting up, he's making good progress," said the staff nurse.

When we went in to see him later that day we found him indeed sitting up, but with all sorts of tubes coming out of him and an oxygen mask over his face. A few days later we were told, "Oh he's a bit poorly today" as if he had a mild touch of the flu. We found him deathly white and in a coma. He died the following day.

During this period we were also going through a ludicrous charade with the social services to discuss provision for his care when he came out. Like John Hoyland, we found that nobody in the medical and caring services was prepared to accept that (old) people die. This seems to me a reflection of society's inability as a whole to come to terms with the fact of death.

Until we are able to accept that death is an integral part of life, then we will never satisfactorily be able to deal with many of the problems that life itself throws up. And old people will continue to die painful and humiliating deaths.

ROGER LLOYD PACK

London NW5

Sir: John Hoyland's article brought back many painful memories of how my late father, who also suffered from Parkinson's disease, was treated by the NHS.

He suffered for 18 years before he died in 1979 and John Hoyland is exactly right when he states that there is no suitable palliative care outside of the hospice movement.

My father was a good amateur athlete in his youth and served in the RAF in the Second World War, but to the NHS he was no more than a guinea pig for treatments that came too late for him and finally a burden. We found him literally tied to a chair in one hospital because they didn't want



him to get bed sores by lying in bed, but had neither the time nor resources to do anything with him.

In the hospital where he was admitted for urgent surgery to a strangulated hernia, he was left without medication and food, urine bottles were left by his bedside for hours as he was unable to make enough fuss for anyone to come and remove them. Finally he was discharged home with abscesses on every stitch as a result of which he haemorrhaged and was admitted back into ITU as an emergency. We actually received a written apology for that, but it did not alter the fact that he had suffered needlessly.

He died early one Friday evening in a general ward in the middle of visiting time. It was both an inappropriate and undignified way to die. Since then, I have myself worked in the health service, both in administration and clinical work and have to say that there is no training to speak of in dealing with incurables. The whole focus is on treatment at any cost however undignified to the patient.

We do believe it is right and proper to involve the private sector in public/private partnership for the provision of new hospital facilities. But the Tories want to go further, and have openly said that they would welcome the privatisation of clinical services. They are already doing it - at Stonehaven in Scotland and at the Royal Hallamshire in Sheffield. Any such commercial operation of patient care endangers the precious relationship between health professional and patient - dedicated to the clinical needs of the patient and no other considerations.

On this issue there is a gulf between the two parties.

CHRIS SMITH
Shadow Secretary of State
for Health

The Labour Party
London SE1

Labour: we won't privatise NHS

Sir: Your article on the failures of the Tories' Private Finance Initiative in the National Health Service ("No escape from privatisation for NHS", 22 April) rightly sets out what a shambles it has been. Not a single brick has been laid for a major hospital scheme, despite constant re-announcements of supposed progress from ministers.

But you wrongly suggest that Labour has embraced the privatisation agenda in the NHS. We haven't.

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Some advice on tactics

Sir: I was interested in your reaction to Vanessa Redgrave's decision to vote for me and Bruce Kent's negative response (letter, 21 April). I have to tell him that Ms Redgrave is just one of a large number of people here who have realised that there is no point in voting Labour as they won't make any difference on the issues they consider important. In her case, these are human rights issues; for others it is investment in education or the health service. In each case, the only real difference is between the old parties on the one hand and the Liberal Democrats on the other.

I had a lot of sympathy for tactical voting campaigns at the last election in seals like ours.

However, GROT's intervention this time is irrelevant. Everyone knows that the Tories are going to lose here and the debate has moved on to who we want to replace them.

Voters must choose between

honesty, investment in public

services and commitment to human

rights on the one hand and a lot of

vacuous waffle on the other.

GARETH HARTWELL

Candidate, Brentford and Isleworth

Isleworth, Middlesex

London NW10

1 April 1997

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A serpent in our cool green Eden

Everyone knows that consumer society is destroying the planet, but the politicians realise there are no votes in sacrificing our lifestyles. Or at least not yet, says Richard D North

Nice fella, no good. Agriculture, probably: thus a cynical politician's judgement on some dull colleague and his ministerial prospects in

Harley Granville-Barker's 1926 *Waste*, which is currently reminding Old Vic audiences that nothing much changes in politics. But some things do. Food production has turned out to match traffic as an issue on which people's doubts about modern ways of living worry them. Even so, Granville-Barker's words still apply and he might have added, "Environment, probably", if he wanted to suggest another "B-list" ministry.

None the less, secretaries of state for the environment have been at least middleweights, because the brief includes local government, which always requires a bit of watching. And increasingly, the core issue—the nuisances, large and small, caused by a greedy society—have demanded and even attracted the boss's attention. The latest, John Gummer, has stolen a march which none of his mainstream political opponents have dared to match. It is the sort of move which demonstrates how hard it is for opposition parties to make the biggest new issue of the century into the stuff of elections.

Mr Gummer has repeatedly said that it is not the water companies' fault that we are short of water and it is certainly not the fault of the Tories. Climate change, he says, has caused the current dryness, unparalleled in recent times.

The Tories need to demonstrate that when they sold the purveyors of one of the three great natural resources (the others being air and soil), it was the prelude—as the late Nicholas Ridley said it would be—to a period of strict regulation and high investment. Any very recent failings need to be acts of God, lest they be portrayed as deficiencies of administration.

But Mr Gummer's was an important political remark. As a statement of whether we face environmental catastrophe because of our gaseous emissions, it is a little ahead of the scientific consensus. Still, Mr Gummer might be right and is in any case sending the right, slightly alarmed, signals. Global warming, like so many other issues in the environment, is a question of risk and therefore of taking a gamble. His remarks on the matter are the mirror-image of the silly optimism and lack of caution with which, as Agriculture Minister, he made the first tranche of ministerial remarks about BSE.

But of course, even in an unseasonal drought, green politics goes further than fire-fighting. "The parties and the media are getting the

message that the environment is not a first-order issue," says Stephen Tindale, of the middle-of-the-road Green Alliance, which aims to put the issue at the centre of politics. It is by now the standard mantra, and goes on to point out that public perception is a peculiar animal: polling insists, for instance, that the environment scores more highly than Europe as a concern of the electorate, though they both come way behind the economy, health and education. But that analysis also reveals it as the issue which won't bark, and which unites people within and between parties as one seen to be more moral than political, just as Europe divides people as a matter more emotional than empirical.

It is likely that there are two sources of one's unease about the environment. The first is that our present carelessness may backfire and hurt us, or our children. We might, for instance, want to clean up rivers, or limit some pesticides on these light green grounds. By and large, we have done those things which obviously screamed out for attention, and the Tories can claim that a

Brundtland said sustainable development's hurdle was democracy

have mostly matched the wider European and Western expectation in such matters. No other party seriously believes the electorate is hungry for big further changes, say in management of the chemical industry, and no other party thinks it has a distinctly different political approach to offer. Unlike most social issues, this is not one that resolves itself into a matter of how much to scold the rich to help the disadvantaged. Most environmental improvements would impinge on rich and poor about equally, perhaps on the poor more.

The related second issue is far harder to manage. Judeo-Christianity is often denounced for its language of man's "dominion" over the world. But it has far more seriously reminded us that self-denial and frugality are the source of private spirituality and social well-being. Modern affluence has linked with environmental concern and this far older tradition to produce a post-materialism which lurks in many a breast. Hardly a new phenomenon: when H G Wells castigated the "Utopian unworldliness of an irresponsible rich man of the starcholding type," he was thinking of the proto-greens, William Morris and John Ruskin. It is tempting to hang the same label on

several modern high-profile greens. But Wells was at least a bit wrong: Morris was a rich man who got richer by preserving a medieval design ethic and wrapping the whole in heartfelt anti-materialism. Laura Ashley, Terence Conran, Anita Roddick, Jonathon Porritt, Greenpeace's Peter Melchett and Friends of the Earth's Charles Secrett would all have to be bundled together to make anything like a new Morris, and even so would have difficulty matching the passion and talent, let alone the profitability, of the Victorian model. But hubris remains the biggest charge against green leaders and most of their followers too.

"I'm interested in ideas," says a tyro politician in *Waste*. "Then why go into politics?" asks a worldly-wise MP. The piece picks over the perennial matter of whether morality has any place in democracy. It meshes well with Stephen Tindale's reminder that Olof Palme, the Norwegian socialist and official midwife to the idea of sustainable development, once said that her off-

spring's biggest hurdle was to survive democracy. Shouldn't greens, like church leaders, press their Utopianism from a position of integrity rather than power-seeking? This is the oldest issue in the politicisation of greenery and the value of Jonathon Porritt is that he has renounced conventional green politics because it is too unworldly, whilst retaining the loftiness which used to attach to difficult bishops. His brand of pained arrogance may irritate many of us, but it is hard to doubt his high seriousness. In his new role as one of the three leaders of the Forum for the Future he is one of several guru-figures who are winning business round to greenery. Business is, one suspects, more than happy to have them inside the tent. Anything, including being lectured, beats confrontation.

However, even if much greenery—even practical greenery—is vaguely absurd, who is to say that it is not the seed of something which will blossom later? In his fantasy on the socialist and Utopian medieval priest John Ball, Morris writes: "I pondered how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fight for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name." Men do not know the harm they do, even when they seek to do good. But equally, the good they do may not become obvious for years.

So there is hope for the Green Party even as it speaks of a deal of what conventionally sounds like nonsense. Its spokespeople are certainly effortless guardians of the idealistic ethic. But in their custodianship of the process which led to the recent Road Traffic Reduction Act and the Home Energy Conservation Act, they can also claim to have been important in the enactment of the only two legislative measures which impose a duty on any authority (actually, only local authorities) to assume that reduced



consumption is something to be encouraged. The Greens' total vote grew well in all the elections after the first in which they stood, in October 1974. Chris Rose, their national election agent, rather charmingly points out that this is not because the party became more popular, but because it has until this year fielded more candidates each time: "Our share of the vote in constituencies where we stand has remained about the same." Except in the election for the European Parliament in 1989, when the party scored over a fifth of the vote in half a dozen constituencies and nearly 15 per cent of the total, its share has not risen above 1.5 per cent (as against a green vote in Germany which rose to

supermarkets. All assume that we may have to curtail our preferred consumption patterns. That is post-materialism by the back door. It is also quite brave: Conservatives naturally enough like firmness best when it applies to the lower orders, not to their own. Perhaps, as a Christian, Mr Gummer is drawn to an area in which private morality must overflow into policy. When Peter Lilley says that his job is not to tax big pay cheques, he then usefully adds that their recipients are under a large but private obligation to redistribute their wealth. It is, after all, a bar to the entry to heaven. Green virtue cannot in quite the same way be private.

And where is Labour? In Michael Meacher they have a shadow environmental protection minister who seems amiable and serious. It looks a little unsure in him publicly to espouse in mid-campaign a particular environmental cause (that which suggests organo-phosphates are involved in the transmission of BSE) just as he stands a serious chance of receiving the full weight of official evidence on the matter and to be taking on the kind of responsibilities that make banning this or that look rather more complicated than it appears to outsiders. It seems right, on the other hand, to propose, as he does, modestly stricter targets for controlling greenhouse gases.

Mr Meacher seems like the kind of man who would rather read or write a good book than buy a speedboat. But asked whether New Labour was a good child of the spiritual socialism of Morris, who saw that "one must cast away riches and attain wealth", he sighed and smiled mildly. "I have a lot of sympathy with people who want peace and quiet and the opportunity for tranquillity, but they'll always be a minority. Winning elections is a pretty hard-headed business."

It's true: in this country the Western world has convinced itself to both deny and defend the right in people to be grossly vulgar if they like. They like.

Porritt has renounced green politics as unworldly while acting like a bishop

7.4 per cent in the Bundestag election of 1994, giving them 49 seats under proportional representation).

The Lib-Dems are probably the most naturally green of the mainstream British parties: composed of mildly affluent urban workers whose politics are a cross between a crusade and a hobby, this was bound to be the case. The Tories have already overseen a deliberate increase in the tax on petrol, but the Lib-Dems propose to go further, and in exchange to reduce road tax on smaller engines. That is brave because it risks upsetting the party's natural constituency. It appeals only to the better nature of the high-mileage Lib-Dem with the big lump under the bonnet.

Still, it is hard to match John Gummer's statements on traffic, housing and out-of-town

suburbs. All assume that we may have to curtail our preferred consumption patterns. That is post-materialism by the back door. It is also quite brave: Conservatives naturally enough like firmness best when it applies to the lower orders, not to their own. Perhaps, as a Christian, Mr Gummer is drawn to an area in which private morality must overflow into policy. When Peter Lilley says that his job is not to tax big pay cheques, he then usefully adds that their recipients are under a large but private obligation to redistribute their wealth. It is, after all, a bar to the entry to heaven. Green virtue cannot in quite the same way be private.

And where is Labour? In Michael Meacher they have a shadow environmental protection minister who seems amiable and serious. It looks a little unsure in him publicly to espouse in mid-campaign a particular environmental cause (that which suggests organo-phosphates are involved in the transmission of BSE) just as he stands a serious chance of receiving the full weight of official evidence on the matter and to be taking on the kind of responsibilities that make banning this or that look rather more complicated than it appears to outsiders. It seems right, on the other hand, to propose, as he does, modestly stricter targets for controlling greenhouse gases.

Mr Meacher seems like the kind of man who would rather read or write a good book than buy a speedboat. But asked whether New Labour was a good child of the spiritual socialism of Morris, who saw that "one must cast away riches and attain wealth", he sighed and smiled mildly. "I have a lot of sympathy with people who want peace and quiet and the opportunity for tranquillity, but they'll always be a minority. Winning elections is a pretty hard-headed business."

It's true: in this country the Western world has convinced itself to both deny and defend the right in people to be grossly vulgar if they like. They like.

At last! Shakespeare's long-lost St George

Yesterday was St George's Day. It was also Shakespeare's birthday. But have you ever thought how odd it was that these two great English occasions should be celebrated on the same day? And that there must be some connection between them, however unlikely?

Well, there is! Experts have recently uncovered the remains of a hitherto unknown Shakespeare play which is on the very subject of St George and the Dragon. It is called, as you might expect, *The Two Georges of Smyrna*.

Would you like to see an extract?

You wouldn't?

Well, too bad, because here it is.

The scene is a back street of Smyrna, some time before the invention of Christianity and the modern day. Enter George, a knight errant, with his attendant dragon.

George: We have journeyed many a mile together before we came to this fair town named Smyrna. And now we seek a place to lay our weary heads. Which is not quite so easy as it sounds. For every door on which we knock for help has got a sign saying: "Dragons not welcome here". Why do they like you not?

Dragon: I cannot tell.

We dragons are a harmless lot, God wot.

We puff and blow and make a lot of noise,

And cause a little fire from time to time.

Why, I myself once burnt a haystack down

While laughing at a joke. My gusty breath

Being full of sparks did catch a corner of the hay

And moments later there was nothing left.

But every dragon has a tale like this.

Thereafter are we careful with our breath

And never cause another fire again.

Not so with humankind, whose carelessness

George: Now, look, old dragon friend...

Dragon: No, say no more!

I'll take your hint and make myself right scarce. I have a cousin here in Smyrna, a dragon like me. With whom I may perchance find room to stay.

I'll search him out and bother you no more.

Tomorrow you can buy a horse and then

You'll look just like a normal knight again.

George: Nay, fair dragon, take not offence at me!

We have endured so many dangers, me and thee,

That being bound together in a common plight,

We should not be parted by a trifling fight.

Dragon: Ye cannot soften me with all this rhyme.

Perhaps we'll meet again some other time.

The dragon tosses his head proudly and goes off

without a second glance. George scratches his head ruefully.

George: Alas, I do repent me of my hasty tongue.

Which yet again has far outrun my thought.

But night draws on and I have still no bed.

And nowhere in Smyrna to lay my weary head.

Yet hold! Have I not a long-lost cousin

Whose name is also George, here in this town?

I think I have! Him will I search for now!

Enter a second dragon, who stands on seeing George and then hails him.

2nd Dragon: Why, master, are you here again so

soon?

George: What mean you, fool? I've ne'er been here before!

2nd Dragon: Oh, master, that's a sorry tale to tell...

Well, it's quite clear what's going to happen, isn't it?

George and the dragon have both got identical

cousins in Smyrna and there's going to be a lot of

incredibly unfunny mistaken identity before

everything is cleared up. So I think we'll quietly lose

the manuscript again.



Miles Kington

Leaves every town ablaze from time to time.

George: Yes, yes, I know. We humans are to blame

For everything that happens in this world,

Yet somehow shift the blame to dragons.

This is the constant burden of your plaint.

Dragon: And it is true, as you have oft confessed!

George: You may be right, but that is not the point.

Dragon: What is the point, oh holy one-to-be,

Oh martyr on the make, oh future saint?

George: The point is seeking lodgings for the night,

And that would be a simple thing to find!

Did I not have a dragon at my side?

Dragon: Oh, now I start to catch your general drift!

I cramp your style, is what you mean to say!

I, who have saved your life so often in the past,

Am now a little surplus to your wants!

Upon the road I am your crusty friend

But here in town a mere embarrassment!

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the commentators

This is no time to go sour on New Labour

Here we go, the terminal week of this terrible campaign. Each day that passes sees the growing disaffection of Labour supporters complaining that the leadership is tilting ever rightwards. The groundswell of protest is silent, muffled, muted for fear of failure on 1 May. But the danger is that Labour supporters are flagging. Many say they will not vote and others may opt for the Liberal Democrats in places where it is tactically insane. A lot of people are now very angry with Blair, especially over Europe – and they are solid committed New Labour believers, not just the smattering of old socialists, warhorses or Granita dilettantes. Day by day residual affection is seeping away and goodwill is turning sour. It can't end too soon.

"Ok, so I'm voting Labour, but I can't bear to listen to them any more." If I hear Blair talking about himself one more time, I'll vote Lib Dem. Me, trust me, is all he ever says and the more he says it, the less I trust him." It's Clinton all over again."

In a trade union office plastered with Vote Labour posters, I came across one featuring a beaming Blair and the slogan "Britain deserves better", but some malcontent had inked in the words "than him", together with a Hitler moustache. The natives are restive.

Labour strategists reckon their own people have nowhere else to go, but apathy and anger are a real danger: the election is by no means won. Blair on Europe, Blair on law and order, Blair on taxation – yes, Labour supporters are being sorely tried. Yet now, on the brink of victory, is no time for all this anger and apathy. Just close your eyes and think of five more Tory years.

Then ask yourself if really, truly, the campaign could have been different? Could we have had honesty and principle? Probably not. After all, it is not just the politicians who lie, but the voters lie too. They tell earnest Rowntree Foundation funded researchers that yes of course they would vote for higher taxes to pay for health and education. They tell pollsters health and education are at the very top of their list of priorities, yet all the evidence is that whatever they say to nice people with clipboards, they will not vote for anyone who hints at extra taxes. For all we know, they may at this moment be lying to pollsters in droves about their true voting intentions.

So the parties lie back to them. Both parties are signed up to spending plans that are simply impossible. The independent Institute of Fiscal Studies throws its hands up in despair at the gaping holes in the budget, yet both swear they will stick to it. Labour posters baldly state "NHS waiting lists will be shorter" on the basis of no extra funding at all. Tory posters lie back just as vigorously. The voters protest sanctimoniously about all this mendacity but they are no better themselves: we probably do get the policies we deserve. Now is not the time for a risky experiment in high-minded leadership.

What kind of more uplifting campaign might Labour have fought instead? We all have our wish lists – but would anything else work? The grumbling behind the scenes has rarely erupted in public but one who broke cover last week was Mark Seddon, the young editor of *Tribune*. He wrote an ill-judged call for more radical policies on the leader page of the right-wing *Evening Standard*, of all places to choose.

Polly Toynbee

The party will spring to life on 2 May. The model army will break step and real politics will resume

Of course the paper gleefully headlined it, "The left is just waiting, Mr Blair" and Labour HQ actually told him his piece was "unhelpful".

So, on behalf of those Labour supporters who yearn for a more principled campaign, I went to seek out what an alternative platform might have looked like. Seddon outlined his menu of tempting policies: restore the earnings link for state pensions, cut defence, increase welfare, renationalise rail and water, pay public sector workers their due, borrow more, not worry overmuch about inflation, and, of course, tax the rich more. Fine – but that is the agenda that lost the last four elections. There may be good arguments for many of those policies, but if they make you unelectable, forget it. Those of us who broke with the Labour Party in 1981 to form the SDP left Labour out of despair at the failure of the party to recognise how fast society was changing beneath their feet. Finally, we have a Labour party that understands the meaning of the past 18 years, even if those changes are unequal.

Mark Seddon echoes the unhappy sentiments of many Labour supporters when he says, "People would respect Blair if he stood up for what he believed in. You can appeal to the best in people." But what, I ask misanthropically, if there is not enough "best" in them? The working class masses no longer exist. Most people in work are middle class home-owners who are 33 per cent richer than 15 years ago, nurtured on the politics of selfishness. What if nowadays the natural majority is comfortable and selfish? Then we might as well all give up." Seddon is right. But that is no answer.

Some words of comfort to the Labour apathists – all is not as black as it seems. It does not take much investigative journalism to probe beneath the party's iron electoral carcass to find that something is still alive underneath it. Whisper it softly, the truth that dare not speak its name – Labour will spring to life surprisingly on 2 May. Blair's New Model Army that marches so firmly in ranks now will break step and real politics will resume. Once the election is over, Millbank iron-fists will no longer hold sway.

Take the "What's Left?" network, for example. It is a loose grouping describing itself as "New Left within New Labour", and it consists of people who will mainly have jobs under Blair: Robin Cook, John Prescott, Clare Short, Jean Causton, Peter Hain, Angela Eagle and some 30 other key players have all attended meetings. Those are not reds under Blair's bed, they are an integral part of the bed he lies on. Deep-throat conversations with some of them reveal an absolute certainty that things will have to be different: the spending plans for instance, are just not sustainable. "More money has to be there by the first real budget in the autumn." Is this sedition? "No. We strongly support New Labour but that doesn't mean we will be blindly obedient. Feel better?"

Personally, I believe in Tony Blair. If he succeeds, we should forgive whatever he says now in order to get elected: elections take place in the nether regions of politicians' souls. Come 2 May, we shall see the calibre of a man who says he has a mission to transform society. Meanwhile, remember the election is by no means over – and what is the point of getting your disillusion in first?

Had an extraordinary encounter the other day. I was presenting a radio show, in which a group of Radio 4 listeners had gathered to talk about the most prized books in their collections, under the eye of an eminent antiquarian dealer. On my left sat a pleasant lady from Leicester called Leonie, who had brought along a first edition of *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, the first published work by the Sixties playwright Joe Orton. Was there anything special about it? Why yes, she pointed out, it was inscribed on the inside page "To Mum and Dad, From Joe", and was therefore a rare sighting of a presentation copy from the notably informal and anti-conventional gay dramatist.

"But the 'Joe' of the inscription could be any old Joe," I reasoned with razor-like logic. "Are you sure it's Joe Orton's handwriting?" "Yes I am," she said. Why? "Because I'm his sister," she said shortly.

A curious kind of fastidiousness overtakes us at moments like this. Your desire to interrogate any family connection of such a brilliant writer and wayward spirit is mitigated by a reluctance to seem merely nosy about a man who was murdered by his lover in 1967.

So it was only later that I ventured to ask why was the inscription "From Joe" so bloodless? Why not "Love, Joe"? Because, she said, they were an unhappy family. Their father, William, was weak and put-upon, "and our mother," said Leonie, "was awful to us."

That much we knew already, in fact, from John Blair's biography of Orton, *Prick Up Your Ears*, which describes how Elsie Orton would vent her frustration and dislike on her family. But then Leonie began to laugh, a weird, indulgent cackle as if talking about a naughty child.

According to Mary Kenny, in *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland*, published next week, one



Unhappy families: the wedding of Leonie, sister of the playwright Joe Orton, in 1964



Talking dirty: bold and beautiful Ms Wolf, the talk of Gay Byrne's *The Late Late Show*

Intimate words with Naomi: it's enough to turn an Irish bishop's head

john walsh



when she was a teenager, while the older gentlemen of the RTE audience sat in silent wonder.

A priest in the audience asked a question about Catholic youth and promiscuity: in return, Mr Byrne asked him if he had anything to contribute to the earlier discussion. "I, er, haven't really had much experience of clitorises," said the priest sheepishly. What, you can't help wondering, would the Bishop of Cloyne have made of that?

News comes in from New York that thousands of citizens face having their lives disrupted in the most inconvenient way. Chaos stares them in the face. Horror grips the souls of Manhattan's rich apartment-dwellers as they face the unimaginable prospect that the city's doormen may go on strike.

The Bishop of Cloyne condemned the show from the pulpit of Lougrea Cathedral. The papers were bananas. Educational authorities and sports authorities denounced *The Late Late Show* as "dirty". The Irish Catholic magazine called Mrs Fox's sweet little confession "a public discussion of bedroom relations between married couples".

Ms Kenny tells it most amusingly and sees it as the start of a media revolution that would "remove all modesty from discussion about physical matters".

To prove her point, she need look no further than last Friday's *The Late Late Show* (still hosted by the indefatigable Mr Byrne) where Naomi Wolf, the feminist author and dreamboat dilated on her new book *Promiscuities*. Friends in Dublin report that the city's population spent the weekend discussing little else than Ms Wolf's clitoris which came up, so to speak, a dozen times in discussion.

Emboldened by Gay

Byrne's anything-goes

insouciance, she asked "Can I mention blow-jobs?" and talked breezily about how good you had to be at fellatio.

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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-298 2636 fax 0171-298 2098

BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

CWS threatens legal action as Regan returns boxes of confidential information to the High Court

Co-op to press for hefty damages

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

The Co-operative Wholesale Society went on the offensive against Andrew Regan's Lanica Trust yesterday, saying it would press for "substantial damages" against the 31-year-old entrepreneur and his "fellow conspirators."

The move came after Mr Regan returned seven boxes of confidential CWS information to the High Court. The material had been obtained with the help of Allan Green, the former retailing controller of the CWS who was suspended last week. The CWS said Mr Regan was then using the information to prepare to launch an audacious £1.5bn break-up bid for the 130-year-old movement.

The boxes contained a breathtaking array of information including minutes of CWS board meetings, computer disks, management accounts, policy documents, information about directors and the name and address of every CWS member.

In his sworn affidavits Mr Regan admitted that the confidential material was copied widely within the financial community and that Hambros, his financial advisers, retained copies. Stolen computer disks were downloaded on to several computers in the City. The CWS said the contents were still on the hard disks of computers at Lloyd's Bank Registrars and at Galileo, the offshoot of Lanica Trust being used for the bid.

A CWS spokesman said: "The affidavits filed in court by Andrew Regan tell an extraordinary story. Over many

months, Allan Green was systematically stealing documents to order and it appears that he was encouraged to do that by Mr Regan and David Lyons [Mr Regan's "right-hand man"]. [They] then used that for their own purposes."

In a string of abusive letters sent to Mr Regan, his fellow directors and his advisers, the CWS lambasts the young entrepreneur's tactics and his ethics.

A letter from the CWS chief executive, Graham Melmoth, said: "Mr Green stole an enormous quantity of documents —

Allan Green stole documents to order and it appears he was encouraged ... by Mr Regan

they fill seven large boxes ... Could you please tell us what reward or inducements were offered to Allan Green?"

In his affidavit, Mr Green admits to meeting Mr Regan six or seven times between September last year and this April: "I now unreservedly accept that I exceeded my authority and was in breach of my obligations as an employee," he said. Mr Regan said that material was copied and sent back by courier to Mr Green's home.

The CWS also despatched letters to Mr Regan's financial and legal advisers questioning their integrity. The letter to Lord Hambros, chairman of Hambros Bank, describes Mr Green as "a common thief". It

A CWS spokesman said: "The affidavits filed in court by Andrew Regan tell an extraordinary story. Over many

months, Allan Green was systematically stealing documents to order and it appears that he was encouraged to do that by Mr Regan and David Lyons [Mr Regan's "right-hand man"]. [They] then used that for their own purposes."

In an attempt to diffuse the situation, David Lyons sent a letter to every member of the CWS board trying to call off the legal wrangle. It said: "I am writing to ask you whether, in preference to continued legal proceedings, it would be in the best interests of members to re-

ceives, will voice their support for the CWS at its annual meeting next month.

Meanwhile the CWS denied that it was still operating a surveillance operation on Mr Regan and his advisers. The Regan team claims they are still being followed and being filmed. The CWS says it called off the security firm Control Risks on Friday.

However, it has emerged that Control Risks was not the first firm approached. The CWS went to rival firm Kroll Associates first but found that they were already looking into Regan's affairs for another party. It is understood that Kroll had been hired by Allied Irish Banks, which Mr Regan had lined up to buy the Co-op Bank if his break-up bid was successful.

Nomura International has emerged as Mr Regan's main backer and is prepared to fully underwrite £1.2bn of debt finance for his bid. This would see Co-op members receive a cash payment of £1,000 each. The Co-op Union would receive £10m to give to "good causes".

One source close to the bid camp said: "The Co-op is now in play. If Regan does not get, someone else will."

The CWS and the Regan camp are due in court tomorrow where Justice Lightman will decide whether or not the injunction banning the use of confidential information should be lifted.

The CWS says it will ask the court to make the interim injunction permanent.

Comment, page 21

ceive details of the proposal and allow them to reach a decision." This was treated to a contemptuous response from Lennox Pyfe, the CWS chairman.

He said: "You mention the legal proceedings. Let me make the position clear. We intend to press on with those proceedings and to secure a judgment for substantial damages against you and your fellow conspirators ... As for your proposal, I have given instructions that it should be returned to you unanswered."

The CWS maintains that its board is unanimous in its opposition to Mr Regan's break-up bid. It says that its corporate members, the regional soci-

ties, will voice their support for the CWS at its annual meeting next month.

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Comment, page 21



Heading for the High Court: Boxes of information obtained by Allan Green, the suspended CWS man, at the offices of the Co-op lawyers Lindlators and Paines

Retail sales up again as exports dive

Diane Coyle
and Chris Godsmark

The two-speed economic recovery was emphasised by figures yesterday showing buoyant high street sales and a sharp fall in manufacturers' export orders.

With the Bank of England urging an increase in interest rates to cool the economy despite the strong pound, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) yesterday pleaded for higher taxes instead. Otherwise, it warned, Britain would face a further rise in the value of the pound and a plunge in export confidence.

Andrew Buxton, the chairman of the CBI's economic affairs committee, said economic policy should be tightened "sooner rather than later", and preferably through higher taxes. "The problem one risks with interest rates is that it will make the pound strengthen even more," he said.

The CBI's comments came as the minutes of the meeting between Kenneth Clarke and Eddie George last month showed that the Governor of the Bank of England called once again for a quarter point rise in the cost of borrowing. If the move was delayed, "more substantial tightening would eventually become unavoidable," Mr George warned.

Although the Chancellor said he and Mr George agreed to differ by a quarter point, most analysts expect whoever has the job after the election to increase interest rates.

This expectation was reinforced by figures for retail sales last month and by the home market aspects of the CBI's quarterly survey of industrial trends.

The volume of sales on the high street rose by 0.3 per cent, and in the latest three months their annual growth rate has picked up to 4.4 per cent. Food sales are growing far more slowly than the rest. Annual growth in sales of non-food items has reached 6.9 per cent, with clothing and footwear especially strong in March.

"This is before the tax cuts, the windfall gains and the election. There is every reason to expect it to pick up further," said Clarendon Barr, an economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

The CBI survey showed that home orders, although below expectations, remained at their highest rate for two years. Companies predicted that home order books would grow over the next four months at the briskest rate since October 1988.

Despite job losses in the latest quarter, manufacturers said they would increase employment in the next four months for the first time since 1989.

But the strong pound, which has risen by 25 per cent against the German mark in six months, became the biggest constraint on export optimism, for the first time since the depths of the recession in 1981. Export optimism was at a six-year low.

The strong pound also meant that manufacturers' unit costs are expected to fall at the fastest rate since the CBI began its survey.

Some City analysts saw the survey as evidence that there is no inflationary danger. But others said it was misleading to focus on manufacturing.

Bosses loggerhead over single currency

MF cheer it warns

City PR man witnessed £2.4m payment to Zimet

Nigel Cope

The document which authorised the controversial £2.4m payment by Andrew Regan to a Cayman Islands middleman was witnessed by a leading City public relations adviser, it emerged yesterday.

The name of David Bick, a director of Financial Dynamics and part of the Regan advisory team on the Co-op bid, appears as a witness on the payment slip together with that of Mr Regan himself. At the time of the payment in January 1995 Mr Bick was a director of Buchanan Communications, the advisers to Hobson, Mr Regan's food manufacturing company.

The £2.4m payment was made to Romuald Zimet, a mysterious businessman, in return for assistance in negotiating an



Key issue: David Bick (left) witnessed the payment by Andrew Regan (centre). Hobson's David Wigglesworth (right) expressed concerns about the deal. Bick photograph: PR Week

extension of a contract between Hobson and the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

Mr Bick said his involvement was perfectly in order: "I was a witness to the extension of the payment slip together with that of Mr Regan himself. At the time of the payment in January 1995 Mr Bick was a director of Buchanan Communications, the advisers to Hobson, Mr Regan's food manufacturing company.

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Bank of Scotland steady as a rock

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

The Bank of Scotland has proved rock-steady in its performance through the UK's boom, bust and subsequent recovery. The bank, probably Scotland's biggest, has eschewed the excursions into investment banking, insurance underwriting and US banking which have brought mixed results for rivals. Instead it has used its limited presence south of the border to cherry-pick the best business there, while making limited forays into Antipodean banking.

Last year proved another vintage one for the bank, although the picture is muddled by acquisitions and disposals. The 22 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £664m in the 12 months to February is more like 27 per cent when the effects of deals are stripped out, including the first full year of BankWest, the Western Australian bank acquired for £437m in 1995.

BankWest was one of the few shadows to darken another strong set of figures. The disappointing earnings of A\$95m (£45.2m) last year, A\$5m below the prospects forecast, were blamed on "unprecedented" pressure in home loans, which has seen interest margins more than halve to 1.7 per cent. Peter Burt, chief executive, warned yesterday the bank had further to go. But effort is being put into cutting costs there, where the cost-income ratio is now 5 percentage points above the parent bank. There was also a note of caution surrounding Countrywide, the former New Zealand building society owned by BoS, where intense competition continues to hit margins.

But the group continues to power ahead in its home market, with little help from lower bad debt provisions, which fell just 1 per cent to £75m. Profits of £399m from the clearing bank represented an underlying rise of 29 per cent on the back of strong lending figures: mortgages were up 14 per cent, while credit cards showed a 17 per cent rise. With nearly two-thirds of its business coming from England, the bank remains in the market for a building society, but not at current prices.

Meanwhile, its lack of branches in England has put it at the forefront of "virtual" banking. The latest manifestation, the banking link-up with J Sainsbury, is storming ahead. It has signed up 100,000 customers after just eight weeks, when, as insiders at the bank gleefully point out, it took Direct Line, owned by arch-rivals the Royal Bank of Scotland, eight years and tens of millions of pounds in advertising to get 500,000 customers. The bank reckons the business, just one of 300 link-ups with outside organisations, could be profitable in 18 months.

The sharp deceleration in the fall in bad debt provisions and a drop in interest margins suggests the banking cycle is about to turn. But BoS should be well geared to any consumer boom around the corner, while its innate can-

tion should allow it to weather any downturn that follows.

Profits are expected to rise to £725m this year, putting the shares, down 0.5p at £338.5p, on a forward multiple of 10. Attractive.

Bargain discovery for Enterprise

Enterprise Inns lived up to its name yesterday by snapping up rival pub chain Discovery Inns for £46m in cash and raising £35m through a three-for-eight rights issue at 19p a share to fund further acquisitions during the summer. The deal looks cheap, given that Discovery's advisers valued the company at £55m, or 14 times historic earnings, when it was on the point of floating last December. It missed the boat and its venture backers are now selling out.

Enterprise is acquiring 277 pubs,

mainly in Wales, the West Midlands and the West Country, and a business that made an operating profit of £5.1m on a turnover of £21.7m in the year to September, when net assets were valued at £16.4m. The properties alone have just been valued at £47.8m.

Enterprise will integrate the estate into its portfolio of 872 pubs, close 30 to 40 of the least viable, and convert most of the 45 managed pubs back into long-lease tenancies.

The chief executive, Ted Tuppen, claims this is more effective than ownership for pubs turning over less than £10,000 a week.

Meanwhile, Enterprise has renegotiated Discovery's supply agreement with Whitbread, which will result in more Whitbread beers being sold in Enterprise pubs and bring a wider range of national and regional beers into the Discovery estate.

Merger costs of £2m in the current year will buy annual savings in excess of £1m from next year, so the deal should be earnings enhancing in 1998.

The acquisition came as Enterprise announced a 7.4 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £6.2m in the six months to 29 March. Most of the growth came from the acquisition of John Labatt's estate of 413 pubs for £6.2m last June, but like-for-like income grew 8 per cent, appreciably ahead of the industry average.

Yesterday it moved to soothe nerves

by pointing out that restrictions had yet to be enforced anywhere, apart from a sprinkler ban covering 25,000 consumers in the Southern Water region.

More to the point, it said that profits for the first six months to March would be over £3m. Even though that represents a significant fall on the £3.35m reported last year and includes a £300,000 profit on the sale of the group's old warehouse, it was in line with market expectations, sending the shares 45.5p higher to 425.5p by the close.

David Coding, the chief executive who steered the group to flotation in November 1993, said spring had come early for Hozelock, with an "excellent" April and strong demand for its products right across Europe. Such is the confidence of Mr Coding and his board that their bullishness spreads out as far as the prospects for the company's full year to September.

The fall in first-half figures has been well flagged by Hozelock, which is seeing more sales and profits pushed into the summer months by the big retailers' just-in-time stocking strategy.

Williams de Broe, the stockbrokers, are looking for full-year profits of £10.9m, which puts the shares on a forward multiple of 42.5p by the close.

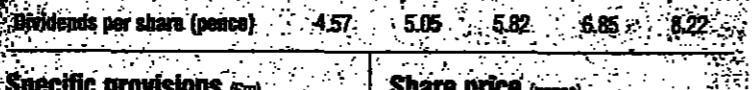
The threat clearly remains that the dry spell will eventually cause hosepipe bans, or that the summer weather fizzles out half-way through, also like last year. Still worth holding, with growth to come in Europe and from new businesses.

Market value: £4.65bn. Share price: 238.5p

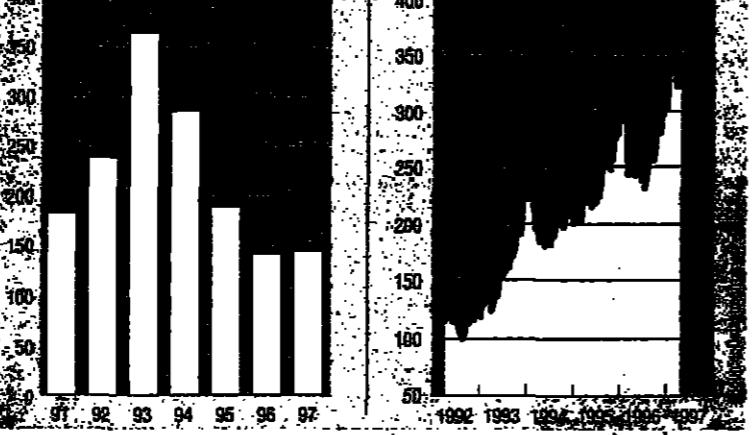
Bank Of Scotland: At a glance

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Pre-tax profits (£m)	125	269	450	545	664
Dividends per share (pence)	4.57	5.05	5.82	6.85	8.22

Specific provisions (£m)



Share price (pence)



Several more deals are under consideration, but the acquisition of surplus Pubmaster pubs in South-east England, where Enterprise is weakest, would make greatest sense.

At 242.5p, up 0.5p, the shares stand on a forward price-earnings ratio of 11, falling to 9, assuming profits rise to £15m this year and £21m next. An interesting punt in a currently fashionable sector.

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

National Grid yesterday became the latest privatised utility to suffer an embarrassing setback to its overseas ambitions, revealing that a project to build, own and operate a 400m power transmission network in Pakistan had been unexpectedly cancelled by the country's new administration.

The Grid, which runs the transmission network in England and Wales, said it was suing the Pakistan government for at least \$21m (£13m), after it refused to extend a letter of support guaranteeing the project. The letter expired on 31 March, before the Grid's consortium had completed moves to finance the venture and sign contracts.

Like other utility companies involved in the Grid's earnings, the news may be small in relation to the Grid's earnings, the news may be potentially lucrative opportunity for the group to use its expertise to expand abroad has been lost. The Grid's other foreign projects include planning a transmission system in

Argentina, along with activities in India and the Philippines.

The Pakistan project was to build a 1,400km cable from the northern capital, Lahore, to Jam Shor in the south. Work was to be carried out by Balfour Beatty with equipment supplied by Rayrolle, a subsidiary of Rolls-Royce. The Grid had claimed it would complete two-thirds of the work by December 1997, though the timetable had already slipped behind schedule.

The wave of utility privatisation in the fast-growing economies of Asia and Latin America have attracted many UK utilities, with mixed success. Earlier this month Anglian Water said it would have to set aside £15m to cover losses on foreign contracts, including Brazil where the group is embroiled in legal action. Uncertainties to a coverage project in Thailand have cost United Utilities £23m, while Thames Water last year pulled out of non-regulated contracting operations at a cost of £95m.

Grid shares fell 1p to 215.5p.

National Grid to sue Pakistan over cancelled contract

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EC forces Anglo to cut 27.5% stake in Lonrho

Magnus Grimond

Anglo American Corporation, the South African mining giant, said yesterday it was ready to pursue several options after receiving confirmation that the European Commission was forcing it to cut its stake in Lonrho from 27.5 per cent to less than 10 per cent.

The Commission said yesterday the latest link-up would have resulted in Anglo and Lonrho controlling the world's platinum output.

The companies' market share in Lonrho was acquired in November after the South African group picked up an 18.4 per cent stake from Dieter Bock, the mining to motor distribution conglomerate's former chairman. One observer suggested that other South African groups, such as the black-controlled JCI or Gold Fields of South Africa, might be interested in the stake to be sold under the EC ruling.

"However, we have two years in which to divest this stake, a good relationship with Lonrho and a number of options to consider, so we are confident of a satisfactory outcome," Julian Ogilvie Thompson, the Anglo chairman, said yesterday.

The bulk of the Anglo holding in Lonrho was acquired in November after the South African group picked up an 18.4 per cent stake from Dieter Bock, the mining to motor distribution conglomerate's former chairman. One observer suggested that other South African groups, such as the black-controlled JCI or Gold Fields of South Africa, might be interested in the stake to be sold under the EC ruling.

ASB seeks more risk disclosure

Roger Trapp

Companies should disclose more information about derivatives, such as swaps, forward contracts and options, and other financial instruments, the Accounting Standards Board says in proposals to be published today.

Though the board points out that past problems in this area have not been "accounting disasters", it is concerned about the extent to which directors are thinking about risk management.

While the 1985 Companies Act and certain standards already require some disclosure, the board does not feel there is sufficient focus on the main risks involved. In particular, it is worried that derivatives are often not recognised in balance sheets because they have been acquired for nil or minimal cost yet can change in value quickly and so expose companies to large profits or losses.

It believes that the proposals will help accountants gain a more complete picture of companies' performance by giving them better information about the "risk profile".

In addition to bringing together and adding to existing requirements and best practice, the

proposals, contained in Financial Reporting Exposure Draft 13, seek to bring Britain into line with policies developed in the US and elsewhere.

The proposals, which it is hoped will become a standard by the end of the year, allow for different levels of disclosure depending on a company's activities and the relative importance and complexity of transactions involving financial instruments.

The board has also responded to comments on the discussion paper published last year by recommending that companies that are operating in fields such as commodities not be required to meet full disclosure requirements if that would entail passing on commercially sensitive information.

It has also delayed issuing proposals on the other issue covered by last year's consultation document - measurement and hedge accounting issues - on the grounds that they would require far-reaching changes to current practice and therefore need to be more fully examined and debated.

However, accountants are warning that the proposed requirements published today could still be too complex.

A&L shareholders get 533.7p at auction

The 640,000 shareholders who

voted to sell their Alliance & Leicester shares by auction without waiting for the start of trading this week will gain 533.7p a share free of dealing costs, a windfall of £344.25 each for their holdings of 250 free shares, writes Clifford German.

The cheques will be sent out for settlement next Monday. The exact price they will receive was decided yesterday after averaging the prices received by the three auctions arranged by brokers Cazenove.

The third auction of 52.3 million shares on Tuesday night raised an average price of 528p a share, compared with 522p last Friday and 532p on Monday. There were 71 successful bids at the final auction, the lowest

at 525p and the highest at 550p. The smallest bid was 10,000 shares at 540p and eight bidders at 528p obtained 22.9 million shares between them.

In the market the shares closed 12p higher on the day at 545p, but still 21p below the closing price on Monday, the first day of trading when the shares touched a peak of 576p.

In addition to the peak of 576p, the A&L windfalls have raised hopes of even bigger bonanzas when Halifax and Norwich Union float this summer. Almost 8 million Halifax members now expect windfalls averaging £1,700 each and 2.9 million Norwich Union members are in line for £1,400.

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Institute of Directors' Convention told why business leaders should be treated like pop stars

John Lewis boss defends fat cats



Britain's fat cats found themselves an unlikely ally yesterday in Stuart Hampson, chairman of John Lewis, the department store chain that eschews conventional capitalism in favour of employee involvement, profit-sharing and social responsibility.

Mr Hampson told the Institute of Directors annual convention at the Albert Hall that business leaders should not feel "management guilt" about maintaining proper pay differentials between the boardroom and the shop floor.

"I don't see the real problem

as 'fat cats'. What's wrong is that there are too many 'thin cats' in business who deserve to be fêted up," he said. "As directors of companies we should have no problem in proclaiming loud and clear that business needs to reward talent and achievement. Wherever we look the most talented players are going to be sought after."

"No one cries 'scandal' about the transfer market between football clubs, about the huge sums paid to top sportsmen, about the *fabulous fees* commanded by the Three Tenors. Business is bound to operate along similar lines to secure a key player."

Mr Hampson, who earned

£343,499 last year, said however that it could not be right that in most businesses, incentives and rewards were focused disproportionately on senior management at the expense of other staff who deserved to feel valued and motivated. "I firmly believe we need to find a greater sense of fairness in the relationship between rewards at the top and those throughout the business as a whole. If more thin cats were having their contributions to success recognised and being fêted up we'd be demonstrating that wealth creation benefits all those who create wealth and not just the few who hold the wealth. That's a step towards making industry re-

cover its respect in society."

John Lewis has 36,000 employees - all of whom are called partners and own the business with shares held on their behalf through a trust.

Each year every employee from the chairman down to the lowest paid storeman receives the same percentage of their salary as a partnership bonus.

Last year a total of £25m was

handed out, equivalent to 20 per cent of pay.

"I can tell you, if you want to show your workforce how well the business has performed over the past year, a 10-week bonus is a pretty clear message."

In his book, said Mr Hampson, if you wanted to satisfy the

customer you had to start by putting the employee first. "If you think of employees as a resource to be utilised as required, to be discarded when times get hard, to be down-sized or re-engineered, then don't be surprised if they behave like it."

Mr Hampson went on to warn that respect for business and business leaders had taken a major knock as a result of the fat cats debate. "Let's face it. The *Greenbury Report* hasn't put the matter to bed. It's just led to repackaging. The £1m-a-year club continues to recruit new members as long-term incentive plans trip in."

Michael Harrison

BA counts cost of IRA hoax

Bob Ayling, chief executive of British Airways, yesterday told of the huge cost of Monday's IRA bomb hoax which closed down Gatwick airport for most of the day, causing misery to thousands of passengers, writes Michael Harrison.

BA was forced to cancel more than 100 services, leaving 30,000 passengers marooned as it put its crisis management plan into operation.

Only two pilots and 20 cabin crew were able to battle their way through the traffic chaos to report for duty and by early afternoon 51 services had already been cancelled.

With chaos reigning in the terminals and BA flights around the world instructed to remain on the tarmac, the airline began booking up hotel rooms across south-east England for stranded priority passengers.

A total of 14 aircraft were in the air at the time of the alert and were diverted as far afield as Bournemouth, Southampton and Cardiff.



Opening salvo: Lord Young at the podium as Tim Melville-Ross looms large on a screen

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling			Dollar			D-Mark		
	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	162.23	162.5	162.21	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Canada	76.27	76.5	76.25	29.28	29.4	29.28	29.4	29.4	29.4
Germany	2.7379	2.7379	2.7379	33.31	33.31	33.31	33.31	33.31	33.31
France	8.3794	8.3794	8.3794	57.780	57.101	57.22	57.22	57.22	57.22
Italy	1.7472	1.7472	1.7472	265.15	265.15	265.15	265.15	265.15	265.15
Japan	1.2472	1.2472	1.2472	54.53	54.53	54.53	54.53	54.53	54.53
ECU	1.4265	1.4265	1.4265	72.78	72.78	72.78	72.78	72.78	72.78
Belgium	57.365	57.10	57.353	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Denmark	10.592	10.592	10.592	89.79	89.79	89.79	89.79	89.79	89.79
Netherlands	1.2487	1.2487	1.2487	55.8	55.8	55.8	55.8	55.8	55.8
Ireland	1.2487	1.2487	1.2487	54.8	54.8	54.8	54.8	54.8	54.8
Norway	1.1435	1.1435	1.1435	70.472	70.472	70.472	70.472	70.472	70.472
Spain	2.3445	2.3445	2.3445	10.432	10.432	10.432	10.432	10.432	10.432
Sweden	1.2487	1.2487	1.2487	85.43	85.43	85.43	85.43	85.43	85.43
Switzerland	2.3722	2.3722	2.3722	14.613	14.613	14.613	14.613	14.613	14.613
Australia	2.0893	2.0893	2.0893	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Hong Kong	12.577	12.577	12.577	7.287	7.287	7.287	7.287	7.287	7.287
New Zealand	2.2456	2.2456	2.2456	74.95	74.95	74.95	74.95	74.95	74.95
Saudi Arabia	6.0882	6.0882	6.0882	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Singapore	2.3449	2.3449	2.3449	14.445	14.445	14.445	14.445	14.445	14.445
				24-19	24-19	24-19	24-19	24-19	24-19

Interest Rates

Country	UK			Germany			US			Japan		
	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
France	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	2.75%	2.75%	2.75%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Italy	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	4.75%	4.75%	4.75%	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Spain	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

Bond Yields

Yields calculated on bond basis.

Yield to maturity = yield to maturity.

Yield to call = yield to call.

Yield to worst = yield to worst.

Yield to date = yield to date.

Yield to maturity = yield to maturity.

Yield to call = yield to call.

Yield to worst = yield to worst.

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Istabraq has style of Champion

Racing

GREG WOOD
reports from Punchestown

The wild, impromptu party which followed Istabraq's win in the Royal Sun Alliance Hurdle at Cheltenham was for many the finest moment of this year's Festival, and the good news after the second day of the big meeting here is that it might have been just a rehearsal for an even better celebration next year.

The field for the Stanley Cooker Champion Novices' Hurdle may have been weaker than anything you will find at Cheltenham, and the trip was half a mile further than the Champion Hurdle, but such was the ease of Istabraq's victory that all thoughts afterwards were of the 1998 championship. Except, that is, of JP McManus, Istabraq's owner. Or so JP would have us believe.

"I really haven't thought about it," McManus said, though of course he knows as well as anyone that a passionate declaration of intent from Ireland's favourite punting son would spoil what little chance he might have of getting a worthwhile price for Cheltenham. "I suppose it would be a target," he added casually, "why not?"

Why not, indeed, given that Istabraq's combination of a fast, ruthless gallop and the lethal finishing kick which took him from last to first at Cheltenham make him an immensely difficult an-

imal to beat. He is, without doubt, the second-best novice hurdler of the season, behind only the champion himself, Make A Stand, and also the only one with the potential to improve past Martin Pipe's hurdler.

"He certainly looks like he could be a Champion Hurdle horse," Aidan O'Brien, his trainer, said. "He'll be able to go with the pace all right, and the drop to two miles shouldn't be a problem."

Istabraq's victory came in just the second race of the day, but still he was completing a double for O'Brien, successful in the opener with Idiots Venture. This was another testament to the young trainer's talent, since less than 24 hours earlier, Idiots Venture had finished third in the BMW Chase.

There was not the slightest sign

of fatigue as he galloped away from his field under top weight.

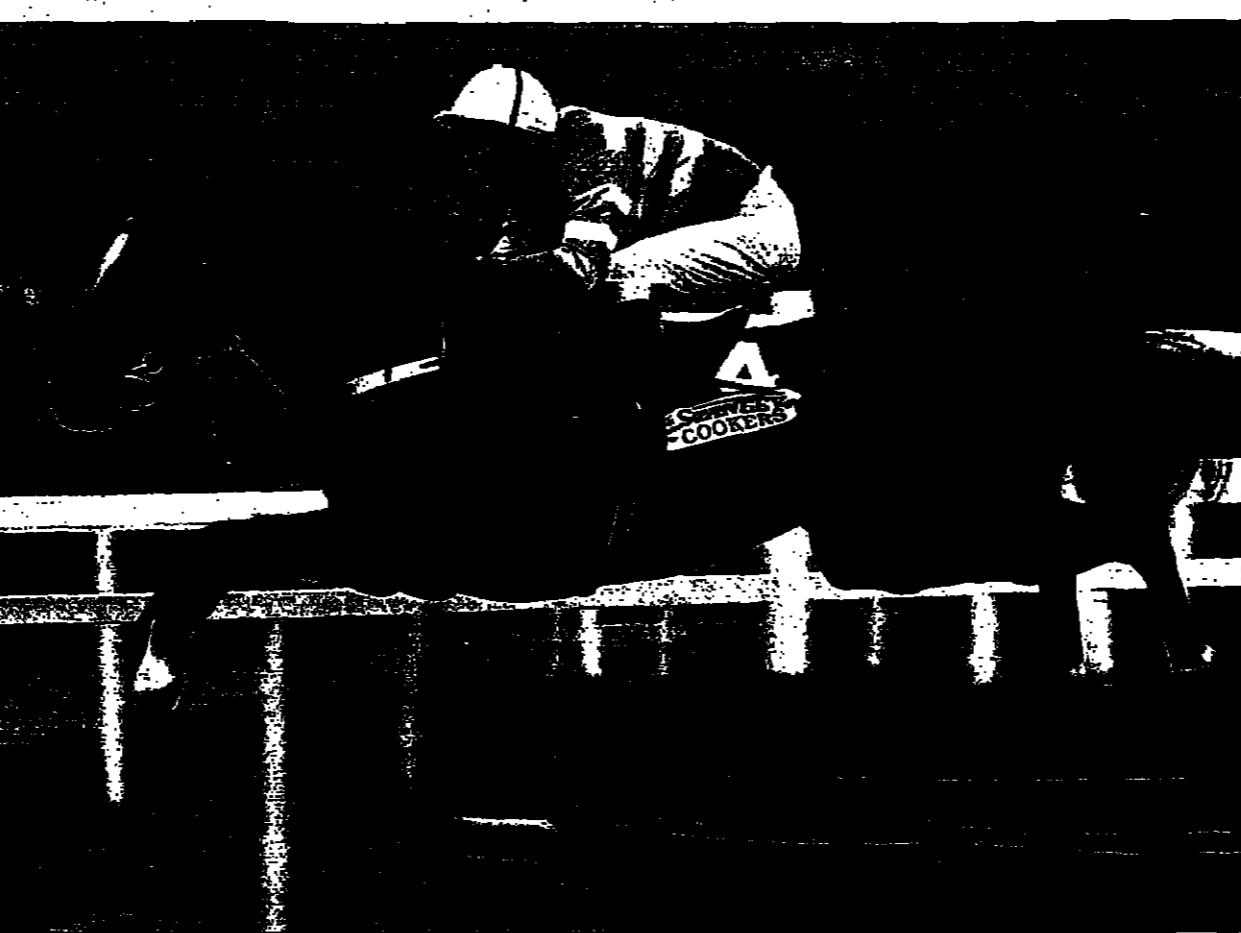
Even O'Brien, not is not used to sudden misfortune. Corket, his runner in the Heinzen Gold Cup, the most valuable race of the meeting, came to the last alongside Noyan with the rest of the 18-strong field well beaten but crashed through it at maximum speed. Trevor Horgan, Corket's jockey, was taken to Naas General Hospital, where he was unconscious on admission. His condition later improved slightly and he was responding to treatment.

After Corket's fall, Noyan was the first to record a second suc-

cessive win in the race for a British stable, but unlike David Nicholson, who saddled Billygoat Gruff a year ago, Richard Fahy, Noyan's trainer, operates at the humble end of the scale. Yesterday's winner is one of just five chasers in his Yorkshire yard, and the horse box which carried Noyan to Punchestown was driven by Fahy himself.

"We saved him for this," Fahy said. "It's not often that you plan work out, but today they have. I don't know how Hal McGee (the winning owner) is going to get his money home, because he had a really good bet. I just hope he's got a big money belt."

No figures were mentioned, but McGee was smiling



Istabraq jumps the final flight on the way to victory at Punchestown yesterday

Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

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at the half-dazed, half-delirious smile of someone who has just become a great deal richer in a very short space of time.

With Nicholson sending out Arctic Camper to win the bumper, this has already been an excellent meeting for the British, and there may be more to come today. Quaker's Field, impressive at Aintree, is the form horse in the four-year-old hurdle, in which Circus Star, Kerawi and Red Rajah complete the British team. In the Champion Stayers' Hurdle, Theatrewold, second in the Champion Hurdle, takes on Paddy's Return and Escartefiche, both of whom did well in the Stayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham.

Frankie Dettori has been stood down for two days with mild concussion after taking a bang on the head in a fall at Epsom yesterday when unseated from Move With Ease before the Warren Stakes. He will have to pass a medical examination before racing at Sandown on Saturday if he is to take the ride on Beemy He Dip in the Classic Trial.

Dettori had been taken behind the stalls on the Bill Tunnier-trained five-year-old when the gelding bolted and unshipped him after travelling for a furlong. He walked to an ambulance and returned to the

weighing room with a cut on his forehead.

Kieren Fallon has chosen to ride the Fred Darling Stakes failure Sleepytime for Henry Cecil in the 1,000 Guineas on Sunday week instead of stable

mate Yashmak or Reams Of Verse who will work together at Newbury this weekend.

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sport

All-rounder who charmed a generation



Denis Compton: handsome, debonair and a sporting hero with nerves of brass. Photograph: Allsport Hulton Getty

Shortly before Arsenal met Liverpool in the 1971 FA Cup final I was made responsible for bringing together members of the team that defeated Liverpool at Wembley two decades earlier.

At a lunch put on by the *Daily Mirror*, a photograph was taken of them to be published alongside one as they once were. Of course, life after Arsenal had been kinder to some than others. Joe Mercer, Freddie Cox and George Swindin had gone into football management but the team's brilliant Scottish schemer, Jimmy Logie, was selling newspapers outside a department store in London.

Nobody needed to ask Denis Compton how things were shaping up. Still handsome and debonair, he was seen frequently on television and had a newspaper column.

However you look at fame, Compton, who died yesterday at 78, is famous not merely for his prowess at cricket and football. Even people who never miss an opportunity to boast that they are utterly uniformed about sport, and deem an

interest in games evidence of arrested development, associate Compton with stardom. The connection thrives in their subconscious and is, therefore, a measure of true fame.

The proof is in the records and the memories of the men who played with, and against, Compton, especially during the long hot summer of 1947 when he amassed 3,816 runs, scoring 180 centuries in 192 matches that included six against the touring South Africans.

However, it was not merely that Compton was a great batsman and, in the view of many qualified judges, the most exciting of any time. It was not just that he had nerves of brass and a constitution that did not appear to require much sleep or bicarbonate of soda. Rather it was that — as John Lardner wrote of Walter Hagen — he was "one who succeeded as few

members of our meekly despoiled species have done, in adjusting the shape, speed and social laws of the world to his own tastes."

Unless it was Compton's friend, the great Australian all-rounder Keith Miller, nobody seemed to get more fun out of sport. Now he is gone, following from that Arsenal team of 1950, Wally Barnes, brother Leslie, Mercer, Logie, and, recently, Reg Lewis.

You may think this pedantic and in the circumstances a little nigracious, but because Compton's 14 appearances for England at football were made in unofficial wartime matches it is not entirely accurate to describe him as a dual international.

In an autobiography published 47 years ago, Arsenal's famed outside-left, Cliff Bastin, wrote: "Denis is one of the greatest all-round sportsmen England has ever known... but as a footballer, I find it rather difficult to form an opinion of Denis, for war-time football provided no proper test. He has a fine left foot, and clever ball control, and perhaps if he had devoted more time to football, since the war, he would have been able to achieve his ambition of adding a full cap to those he won during hostilities. As it is, Denis' quite unsportsmanlike behaviour would be quite fitting for a footballer."

Compton's cricketing prowess and good looks led to a breakthrough in sports marketing when an actor, accompanist, Bagdad Harvey, signed him to an advertising contract with the makers of Brylcreem. Others soon followed: the Fullham and England inside-forward, Johnny Haynes, and a

dual international, Arthur Miller of Arsenal and Gloucestershire, but Compton's is the face that most people of my generation remember.

Apart from great natural ability, what Compton had above all else was an appealing personality. He took sport seriously enough but like Miller, who had some hairy experiences as a fighter pilot, he did not think it to be a life-or-death matter.

Little about Compton, in his marvellous batting or his life, suggested much in the way of conformity, but unlike many of today's heroes he did not embarrass himself or the establishment. An important thing was that people would queue for hours to watch him play. I know this to be true because I was one of them. You could not hope to emulate Compton but his improvisation was thrilling.

When barely 17 years old I played against Compton in a Football Combination match at Hatfield. I called him "Mister". He knocked me over when going for the ball, and at the time I could not think of anything better.

'A legend with a film star status'

ADAM SZRETER

There were tributes from the worlds of cricket and football following the death yesterday of Denis Compton.

The former England captain Ted Dexter said: "I'm very sad to hear this. Denis was an inspiration to me. I saw him at Lord's as a schoolboy and got his autograph while he was fielding on the boundary. He was a definite genius with the bat. He adored the game and we should mourn his passing."

Another former England captain Brian Close, who played against Compton just after the war, said: "In those years there were two great players for England. There was Denis and there was Sir Len Hutton. The great thing about Denis was that he enjoyed life to the full. He was a great, natural ball player and never took things too seriously."

The umpire Dickie Bird said: "I shall miss him, everyone will miss him. Not only was he a great player but he was also a friend, a true friend of mine. He's done a tremendous amount for English cricket, he was always on hand to help young cricketers. He was a tremendous ambassador for the game."

A more recent England captain Chris Cowdry, Colin Cowdry's son, said: "My mother and father were close friends of his and this will sadden them. But he had not been very well and no one would have wanted him to suffer. He was one of the truly great personalities of sport, let alone of cricket. He conveyed a sense of fun and he loved life."

Compton, of course, also played football for Arsenal and England and a spokeswoman for Arsenal said: "The club would like to pay tribute to the great Denis Compton. He was a talented all-round sportsman and our thoughts are with his family and friends."

Sir Stanley Matthews said: "He was a great footballer. I played with him many times in wartime internationals for England. I remember a particular game against Scotland when we won by several goals to one and Denis tore them apart down the left wing. I think Tommy Lawton scored three or four goals that day from Denis's passes."

The current Middlessex captain and England selector, Mike Gatting, said: "It is very sad. He was a legend at Middlessex. Everybody from the youngest on the staff to the oldest member has fond memories of him. Compo was friendly to me and always took an interest in my career. He was an amazing man."

The Middlessex coach and former player, Don Bennett, said: "He was a legend. We played Surrey in a three-day game in 1950 and 60,000 people came through the turnstiles, mainly to see him. He was the draw. He had film star status."

And the Prime Minister, John Major, said: "Those who ever saw Denis Compton bat have an imperishable memory of the greatest cavalier of cricket."

Sax's re

Connor's lessons for Stephenson

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Chelmsford
Essex 246
Hampshire 103-7

It is three years since John Stephenson departed Chelmsford for greener pastures and the captaincy of Hampshire. Even so, he should still remember the perils inherent in being seduced into bowling first by an Essex green-top that claimed 17 wickets in the day.

The first rule is you need some decent bowlers, a criterion only Cardigan Connor satisfied for the visitors with his 7 for 46. The second is that you don't want to bat until day two, a discovery Hampshire made when they ended day on 103 for 7, some 143 runs behind. Having won the toss Stephenson probably contemplated some kind of ascendancy. Instead having dismissed Essex for 246, his team were facing annihilation in three days.

With Robin Smith missing due to an Achilles tendon strain, Hampshire, despite the

addition of their Australian import Matthew Hayden, were always under-strength. It was a fact Essex's superior firepower with the ball soon exploited. Ashley Cowan, in particular, proved a real handful, taking the first three wickets, including the prized scalp of Hayden, caught off his glove as he tried to swivel onto a bouncer.

A tall man with a high action, the 21-year-old Cowan had the ability to generate good pace off a short run and he finished the day with figures of 4 for 35. He was well supported by Ronnie Irani, who did for Kevin James, bowling him playing back, as well as for Stephenson whose bat and pad catch was taken by Darren Robinson on short-leg.

But if Essex relied on team work, Hampshire were almost solely reliant on the 36-year-old Connor, currently enjoying a benefit year. To the envy of many, Connor has something of a reputation for being able to dismiss Graham Gooch, a distinction upheld when he had the great man, now in his 24th season with Essex, lbw.

But if that was the one they

wanted, Hampshire's spirits quickly flagged as Paul Prichard and Nasser Hussain went about the reconstruction, adding 97 for the second wicket, before Hussain had his off bail trimmed by a leg-cutter from Connor, who had now changed to the River End.

With Prichard lbw on the stroke of lunch for a fluent 65, the stage was set for Stuart Law, left out of the Australian touring party, to reassess his impressive credentials. Adding a rapid 53 with Ronnie Irani, he looked untroubled until he was lbw, whipping across a straight ball from Dimitri Mascarenhas.

It left Irani contemplating the belligerent role he likes best and one, for Essex at least, in which he excels. Having pummelled a couple of scorches through the covers off the back foot, he was out one short of his half-century when he tamely skied a leading edge to James at cover.

That was Connor's fifth wicket and it was not long before he and Stephenson, having a belated bowl, polished off the tail, unaware of the ruin that lay ahead.

It was still not much evidence of any ability to bring the ball back into the right-hander but, until Mike Smith appeared in the evening, no one swung the ball much anyway. Mostly it moved off the seam, and then only under cloud cover. When the sun shone for lengthy periods, batwing looked straightforward.

Thus Gloucestershire must have cursed the combination of early-season errors and inadequate footwork which plunged them to 84 for 5. That was their lowest point, not least when Mark Alleyne, their new captain, found himself in no-man's land and was leg before without scoring to James Ormond.

Positive action was called for at this stage and Russell provided it, which probably eased any pressure that Young might have been feeling in his first Championship innings. Russell was soon busy dabbing and nudging as well as dabbing extravagantly

It was the sort of thing, though, that can happen in the best of circles on the first day of the season and allowing for various indications of rustiness and the odd fielding lapses, Leicestershire probably felt that the champions will not want to see that repeated too often this season.

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Thus Gloucestershire must have cursed the combination of early-season errors and inadequate footwork which plunged them to 84 for 5. That was their lowest point, not least when Mark Alleyne, their new captain, found himself in no-man's land and was leg before without scoring to James Ormond.

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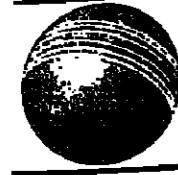
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Here comes summer
The opening day of cricket's
County Championship, page 26

Survival is the priority for Juninho

Football

SIMON MULLOCK

Juninho yesterday promised to unleash the full scope of his Brazilian brilliance in a bid to end Middlesbrough's 12-year wait for a trophy, but admitted that Premiership survival remains his top priority.

The 22-year-old midfielder understands the significance of Middlesbrough's passage into their first-ever FA Cup final and

is relishing the task of pitting his wits against Chelsea at Wembley next month.

But he also realises that a fleeting moment of glory pales into insignificance compared to the fight to stay in the top-flight and believes that the team Bryan Robson built for £26m will have to win three of their last five matches to remain in the big time.

Juninho, once again in brilliant form as Middlesbrough ended Chesterfield's dream

with a 3-0 semi-final win at Hillsborough on Tuesday, said: "The FA Cup is one of the most important competitions in the world and I know how much it means to English players. It was an excellent performance by us. We showed that when we get the ball down and pass from back to midfield to the forwards then we are a good team."

"It is great for the fans. They

haven't been very happy because we lost to Leicester in the Coca-Cola Cup final and then to Sunderland. But for now we have to concentrate on the important matter of the League. I think we have to win two games from the four we have away from home and win our one home game as well to stay up."

The survival bid begins at Tottenham tonight, but there is no

doubt that Juninho is delighted to be locking horns with the likes of Gianfranco Zola, Roberto Di Matteo and Franck Leboeuf when he returns to the capital on 17 May for the final.

"It is very good for Middlesbrough that we are through to the final and that we are playing Chelsea. The FA Cup final will be much better than the Coca-Cola Cup final I'm sure, because Chelsea play football.

It should be open, but that's the English way. I just hope we can

win it this time," Juninho said.

It is a view shared by the Danish striker Mikkel Beck, who opened the scoring against Chesterfield: "It's certainly time that Boro won something. I

think we were unfortunate not

to have won the Coca-Cola Cup at Wembley but now we have a

second chance and against a

team that wants to play football."

Taylor warns on sportsmanship

Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, yesterday urged members to be mindful of their role in setting an example after Ruud Gullit joined Arsène Wenger in criticising players who break the game's unwritten code of gentlemanly conduct in England.

Taylor said: "I think it is a good time to remind all players to keep setting the best sporting standards no matter what is at stake."

Chelsea's manager, Gullit, took up Wenger's theme after Vinnie Jones, Wimbledon's captain, launched a long throw in the closing minutes of their 1-0 London derby defeat on Tuesday. In line with what has become common practice, Jones should have thrown the ball to Chelsea, who had kicked it off when their goalkeeper, Craig Forrest, needed treatment for an injury.

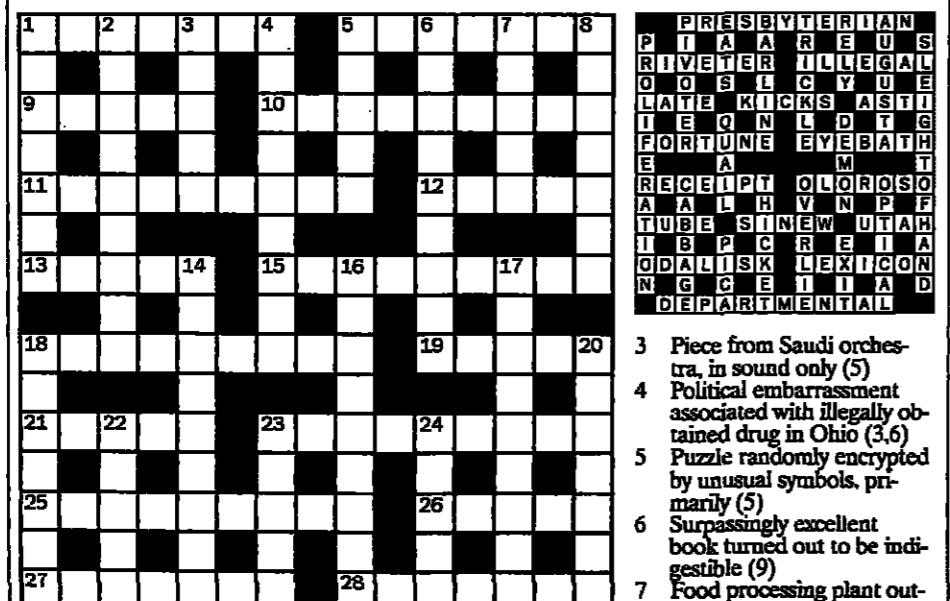
The incident happened three days after Chris Sutton, the Blackburn striker, forced Arsenal to concede a corner from which Rivers scored an injury-time equaliser at Highbury, ending Arsenal's hopes of the Premier League title and improving his own team's chance of escaping relegation. Arsenal players were furious with Sutton as the throw-in had been conceded so that Stephen Hughes could be treated for an injury. Taylor said: "Although I've not seen either the Sutton or Jones incident yet these are clearly worrying instances. We've all done a lot of work getting the game a good name for sportsmanship in this country. We won the Fair Play award at Euro '96, English clubs are high in the table for good behaviour and we've earned an extra place in the Uefa Cup next season."

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3281. Thursday 24 April

By Spurio

Wednesday's solution



ACROSS

- Energy required by neon lighting in Georgian city is shown below (7)
- Golf at Oxford - it involves a lot of driving (5,2)
- Indication of agreement by Seychelles assembly (5)
- Bridge partnership in row after his present for drink (5,4)
- A new trademark used in Australia is similar (9)
- Herb's age we have been told (5)
- Part of play audience will have watched (5)
- Sketch for which Association attracts silly rebuke (9)
- Not having completed distance, talk of completed ultra-slow vehicle (4,3)
- Date with oriental commander in public house (5)
- Receipt covering £1, something kept as a souvenir (3)
- Receiving centre where you've to use metro from now on? (9)
- Extremely difficult woman's clean round the bend! (9)
- Attitude needed in business in the city (5)
- Pasture fellow leased out, featured in advertising sheet (7)
- Money used in old court, now obsolete (7)
- Kiss mostly greeting exam success - mark of 60 or 65? (3,4)
- Small number requiring plainer sort of type face (9)

DOWN

- Odour that is associated with hospital department (5)
- Embroiderer's knot featured in picture books (5)
- Kiss mostly greeting exam success - mark of 60 or 65? (3,4)
- Small number requiring plainer sort of type face (9)

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sport

TTURSDAY 24 APRIL 1997 • THE INDEPENDENT

Liverpool playing for pride

Phil Shaw previews the European

semi-final tonight at Anfield, page 27



Michael Stich finds it tough going during his 6-3, 6-0 defeat by Richard Krajicek in the Monte Carlo Open yesterday

Photograph: Reuter

Compton the corinthian dies at 78

DEREK PRINGLE

Cricket Correspondent

In an era where cricketers are becoming more faceless by the season, the passing of Denis Compton at the age of 78, will be mourned by all those who believe sportsman should passionately embrace more than the sport itself. Compton may have been a fine footballer and an even better cricketer, but he embraced life in such a way that neither dominated his life.

Having joined Arsenal as a 17-year-old in 1935 he made his first-class debut for Middlesex a year later, scoring 1,000 runs in the season. The following year he made his debut for England, the first of a 78-cap career that saw him score 5,807 runs at an average slightly over 50.

As a batsman, he was as nat-

Denis Compton 1918-1997

Cricket career: Middlesex & England

Tests: 132 - 276 - 5,807 - 50.05

52.5 - 639 - 26,942 - 50.95

Wickets: 122 - Best bowling: 5-76

56.41

As first-class batsman: 244 - 5,807 - 50.05

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